



jeervadhara

THE AGENDA OF THE VICTIMS

Edited by
Felix Wilfred

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The Agenda of the Victims

Edited by

Felix Wilfred

Jeevadhara
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Tel. (91) (481) 597430

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General Editorial

Jeevadhara was launched in 1971 as the concerted effort of Indian theologians with five distinct objectives such as: one, to follow the lead of Vatican II in recognising and confirming the valuable intuitions, new insights, orientations and approaches of theologians and Church reformers in the course of more than half a century, by returning to the sources; two, to avoid the danger of polarisation through dialogue between conservatives and liberals who emerged in the context of the renewal and reforms initiated by the Council; three, to help evolving an Indian theology, Biblical in its emphasis and Ecumenical in its ambit in the Indian way of life and thought; four, to link theology with the life situation of the people, carrying what is expressed right into the readers' lives; and five, to strive to be "the current of the living water" (= *jeevadhara*) that flows from God into human hearts.

Looking back we do not claim to have succeeded in gaining all our objectives, but at least there was no going back. Now that we are at the dawn of the New Century and New Millennium, *Jeevadhara* feels that humanity is passing through a most critical phase of its history, in spite of the present-day giant strides in material progress and the unprecedented explosion of knowledge. In a "Global Village" that the world is said to be and is in a real sense, the glaring differences and discriminations among humans, the caste and class distinctions that tear them apart, abject poverty of many amidst the superabundance of a few, the increasing devastation of ecological balance and environment which makes the global village more and more inhabitable, the disappearance of equality, freedom and fraternity, that makes a mockery of democracy and a thousand other factors are all the more conspicuous, disgusting and revolting. Only the vast majority who are made victims one way or other can find a way out by empowering themselves against all odds.

The Church to which, in such circumstances, people look up for light and leading is mostly idling in complacency and triumphalism in the name of *Kristu-jayanthi* 2000 as if it were on a path of conquest of the world for Christ. Ecclesiastical authorities are squandering their capital of leadership by overemphasizing the most trivial issues to such an extent that they seem to be incapable of talking about more serious problems that face the people today. The Centre leadership has already been trying to silence some of the best

theologians by demotion, censures and even excommunication and are still in many ways discouraging others from dreaming for the future.

In this context *Jeevadhara* has to affirm that Christian theology is not a mere scientific study of Christianity as if it were something outside of it and unrelated and indifferent. Its focus is Christianness, humanity's intimate union with God in the crucified Jesus Christ, the Son of God who taking the form of a slave removed the slavery of humanity. The object of theology is not an ontology of God for humans, but an anthropology of human suffering before God. It must culminate in the experience of the Divine. *Jeevadhara's* objective is not to present an accurate picture of God, which is absolutely impossible, but to show that God alone is the real *meaning* and *ground* of human life.

Focus of our attention is the Jesus' story. It is the story of the emergence of humanity of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Divine, making present in time and history the creative Word, the Son of God, offering to all humans the possibility of becoming sons and daughters of God in the only Son of God.

It is the story of the breaking in of the Kingdom of God here and now. The task of the Church is not to replace other religions or even to fulfil them, but to proclaim salvation achieved by Jesus Christ for all humans, to recognise at the same time the relevance and unique contributions of other religious leaders, prophets and apostles as the common heritage of the whole humankind and part of the one history of salvation.

Jeevadhara wants to spell out Christian theology as the story of the common man and woman, his/her social, economic and political exploitation and their daily struggle for liberation from oppressive forces and their moral pilgrimage for attaining justice and peace in the kaleidoscope of modern life.

Jeevadhara wishes its readers and the whole world all the love and blessings of God in whom "we live and move and have our being", throughout the New Century and New Millennium in spite of the dark cloud that looms over us. We should also like to keep in touch with all our readers and we shall ever be responsive to their suggestions.

General Editor

Editorial

After much fanfare, the new century has finally arrived. In our "administered world", a new breed of managers are there with their blue-prints and their infallible prognostications. When the managers, the marketers, the academics, religionists and a host of the like are ready to take over the new century and steer it to their directions of interest, there lie on the wayside the immense mass of the victims, broken and bruised. Have the victims of the present order anything to say about the future of our world, or have they to content themselves like Lazarus with the crumbs that fall from the tables bedecked with the universal programmes of the "wise" ones? That is the issue with which this very first number of *Jeevadhara* in the new century wants to engage itself.

The poor are the teachers of hope for a disenchanted humanity. And yet, they have no room and no voice. We need to see the future of the world and humanity through the eyes of the victims. Their dreams and hopes have a salutary role. Any effort to give concrete shape to what they hope for is an effort to save humanity intoxicated with science and technology, and bring it back to a posture of sanity and equilibrium. Powerless though, the victims want to uncover the grotesque lie that envelops our world today. For, the fictitious economy and the process of globalization have created a world of make-believe. The prospects for the victims as well as for the whole human family becomes brighter when this world of sham is deconstructed.

The first article of mine in this issue reflects upon the agenda of the victims inspired by the thought that it is the poor who can really explore the hopes for the new century. K. Shanthi shows how the new century needs to wear a human face if it has to redeem the victims, particularly the women. It is followed by the contribution of my research student V. Arul Raj who makes a rigorous analysis of the way globalization and market function and how they try to

ingeniously vanquish the poor and thwart their hopes. It is a matter of "Trojan Horse in Global Village". Culture is an issue of identity and selfhood for the poor. Invasion of their culture is an affront to their future. M. Amaladoss enquires into the inter-connection between culture and economy.

The second set of articles are Biblical and theological in nature. Sampathkumar shows how in the Inter-testamental period just before Jesus' arrival on the scene, Palestine was characterized by the struggles of the victims for a different future and how their attempts were repeatedly suppressed. Bandits and Messiahs appeared to them as heroes at the time to realize their dreams of freedom from want and destitution as well as from the foreign rule. D. Alphonse leads us into the deeper waters of the Gospel and shows how Jesus related himself to the economy of the times and how his condemnation of riches and proclamation of the poor as blessed meant the beginning of a new era of hope for the victims. To conclude the whole, issue, the Argentinean scholar Nestor Miguez offers us, against the backdrop of globalization, a reflection on Christian engagement and theology with the hopes of the victims as the focus. I wish to thank all the writers for their scholarly and thought-provoking contributions to this number of *Jeevadhara*.

At the dawn of the new century, humanity cannot afford to create victims anymore. It is the path of self-destruction.. To be Christian in the new century is to hope with the victims for a new and transformed world, more bright and humane. Like the sling of David, the poor are armed with hope against the mighty Goliaths who want to continue their monopoly also in the new century. The victims hope for light at the end of the tunnel.. After all, it is they who have the eyes to see already now "a thousand suns beyond the clouds".

School of Philosophy
and Religious Thought
University of Madras

Felix Wilfred

The Agenda of the Victims

The Poor Explore the Hopes for a New Century

Felix Wilfred

This article is inspired by the thought that, ultimately, it is the hopes and dreams of the victims that will save the world, and not the ambitious plans and programmes prepared by the managers of our present world. We learn of the hopes of the poor by examining some of their unanswered questions against the background of the huge blanket of lie with which globalization has covered up the real messy state of things in our world. The prospects for the victims of a bright new century become real by unmasking the illusions and lies under which our world is made to suffer. The final part of the article reflects on what contribution the Christian faith could make to keep alive the hope of the victims and help realize their agenda of an ascent to greater humanization.

The Poor as Teachers of Hope

In the state of Tamilnadu this is the time of *Pongal* – a feast of the people, of those who till the ground and sweat it out in rain and in sun-shine. It is a time of celebration after the harvest. The state distributes free dhotis and saris to the poor and indigent. It is a very moving experience to go to any one of those distribution centres and see the people standing in the never-ending serpentine queues. Their frail frames marked with the scars of suffering is the scandalous reflection of the society in which we live. If we read into the bright eyes of children and women waiting for their turn with a sense of expectation and wonderment, we realize what it is to dream. We learn from the scintillating flashes of light in their eyes what it is to be in deep misery and yet continue to hope. The poor are the best teachers of hope for a disenchanted humanity. Hope is strongest when it emanates from the depths of misery. Like the lotus flower blossoming from out of the muddy bottom, the blooming of hope for the new century comes from the poor and their agenda.

What is There to Celebrate?

It is the time when the air is full of jargons on the new century

and the new millennium. The market has a galore time. 2000 appears to be, in fact, a market-event. Market is perhaps the one which benefits most from the millennial celebration. Be sure, the market will tell us soon that what we are celebrating just now is not the real beginning of the century and millennium; the real one begins on Janaury1, 2001. What a wonderful idea; there is one more year to produce and sell all kinds of wares!

What are we really celebrating? And more basically, what is there to celebrate? At the dawn of the new century can we really say that we have reached a greater degree of humanity over which we could rejoice? The truth is far from it. If the temporal progress of time were to coincide with actual development of humaneness, then, of course, there is enough room to celebrate the year 2000 as an important landmark.

But alas! We live in a world, in which the overwhelming majority of the poor have little to celebrate. Their condition is alarmingly becoming one of progressive exclusion. They are the unwanted lot of a globalizing world. This condition of the poor is in stark contrast with the grandiose plans and programmes projected by the rulers of our world. For the growing number of the well-to-do, the world is becoming a place to be managed and administered. Management is the buzz-word. The commercial sectors on their part project the prospects of the market and the capitalists the accumulation of wealth; the academics conjure up new avenues to be explored in their respective fields; and the self-styled custodians of religio-cultural sectors project certain ethereal visions. These segments of the society are the most incompetent to judge our world, and yet they rule the world with their *fiats* and *fatwas* in every field. What counts is their plans and projections, their agenda and programmes for the society.

But, in fact, who are the ones who will be able to tell us about the true face of our societies? Who are the ones who will expose the festering wounds of our world?. Those who are able to really tell us about the true face of our world and judge it are the victims. In their judgement about the world, we hear God's own verdict. Anyone today who would like to listen what God thinks of the mess we have made of our world, has to listen the judgement the poor make about our world through their wounds. The poor may not be articulate, but they themselves are in a way the judgement of God.

The victims on the margins do not have any space, any role in the planning for the future; they are left behind and even pushed out.¹ But if in the suffering of the poor we hear God's judgement about our world, if we see in their tears and agony the true face of our world, any projection for the future, any agenda for the new millennium has to start from their longings and yearnings. The agenda from the periphery is the agenda of God. The real future of humanity comes from here and not from the ambitious decisions from the centres to dominate the world. It is from the site of God's visitation - the margins - a new world will take shape and make the millennium really new and different - that is our hope.

Honour to the Dead and a Warning to the Living

Before reflecting on the hope of the poor and the agenda of the victims, let us start casting a glance at the century we have left behind. Without any exaggeration we can say that the twentieth century has been the most violent one ever in human history. It has showed not only to what extent the destructive human power could reach, but also the extent of exclusion and negation the poor of the world could suffer. The two World Wars, the brutalities of concentration camps, the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the death-camps of Cambodia under Pol Pot, totalitarian regimes of all colours and hues, the scandalous pauperization of large masses of people, merciless ethnic cleansings, millions of refugees, the humanly induced tragedies like that of Bhopal – all these are grim reminders of a century which we can forget only by risking to repeat it.

What is happening in our societies today is a silent Holocaust in which millions of poor are consigned to the jaws of death, and the God-given gift of life is snatched from them by the brutal selfishness of the wielders of power of all kinds. The Holocaust is everyday experience in India and the Third World at large. It is silent and hidden from the eyes of the world. The ability to conceal the actual reality of our world and the suffering of the poor is done so very systematically in our world.

Some time ago, on my way to the city of Prague in Czech

1 Cf. Felix Wilfred, "The Margins. The Site of God's Visitation. A Meditation", in *Third Millennium II* (1994), pp. 110 – 117.

Republic, I stopped to visit the concentration camp of Dachau – the mother of all concentration camps and the first one Hitler created to serve as model for his scientifically worked-out technology of death. At the entrance to the gas-chamber in this concentration camp there stands today a bronze statue. It symbolizes the thousands of innocent prisoners who were done to death brutally. Even as I was thinking of the ground on which I was standing, stained by the blood of so many innocent victims, I was struck by a very telling inscription under the bronze statue of the prisoner. It read : “Honour to the Dead and a Warning to the Living”. Has the world taken seriously this warning coming from the gas-chambers of the past? Today, new forms of Holocausts are everywhere in our society and the victims are the poor, women, dalits and the weaker segments. The likes of Hitler are not a thing of the past. They are incarnate everywhere in more subtle ways but in no less brutal manner. If everyday 35000 children die of malnutrition and lack of medicine in the underdeveloped parts of the globe, what is the kind of world we are living in? Is it not a brutal world that deprives the defenceless of their very right to live?

I

The Unanswered Questions of the Victims

To hope with the poor for a different world calls for a deeper consciousness about the challenges and questions facing us. Many challenges can be enumerated from the perspective of the victims of the present order of things. I would like to highlight here five major challenges which remain also the unanswered questions of the poor and the marginalized.

1. Human Solidarity and Togetherness

Undoubtedly we have lived through a century that has demonstrated to us the heights of human ingenuity – the revolutionary theories of relativity and quantum physics, many break-throughs in medical field and bio-genetics, and not the least, the landing of the humans on the moon. The conquests in the fields of science and technology have added to humankind an unprecedented self-confidence. There was a time when the humans felt defenceless before the powers of nature. The creation of the modern scientific and technological world was the attempt to control nature that threatened to overpower the humans.

The point to note is that the most difficult question facing humanity has not been answered by science and technology. It is the question of human solidarity and togetherness. We live in a highly fragmented world in spite of the lie of globalization propagated to create an impression of world-wide unity. For the poor who experience exclusion, the important question is that of *inclusion*, the creation of true communities where they will be equal partners, where they will have dignity and voice. The hope of the victims augment not by the progress of science and technology, nor by the false promises of current economy, but by true signs of solidarity. Human solidarity is the most urgent question that needs to be answered.

Human beings are among the most vulnerable creatures in the universe. The strength of the human family is in its collective life, without which it simply cannot survive. Every encounter of peoples, cultures and civilizations, then, goes in the direction of raising the hope of human survival. Hopeless is the situation when one segment of humanity, one culture or civilization pretends to be the all. It is a process that weakens humanity. For, it carries the seeds of destruction. That is why we look forward to a century of greater human solidarity and togetherness, and not a "clash of civilizations" (Samuel Huntington). We cannot forget for a moment that a nuclear conflagration of the world is a real possibility that hangs over the head of the human family like Damocles' sword. It provides an added reason to invest our energies in bringing peoples and nations together in mutual understanding and cooperation. The meeting of peoples and races, cultures and religions will be the most hopeful thing that could happen. It is the direction in which we need to move. I think it is this perspective and consciousness of solidarity that will be a very important source for the victims of the present world. Hence, any philosophy or praxis that goes against solidarity is one that jeopardizes the cause of the victims. In brief, authentic community of equals remains the unanswered question of the victims.

2. Pluralism as the Self-defence of the Victims

There are several reasons why the ideal of human solidarity which signifies hope for the victims is far from being realized. A chief reason is the homogenization of our world in all respects. Homogenization is a process created and sustained by the powerful, and it is they who reap its advantages. For the poor it is a matter of being forced

to conform to systems in which they have no role to play, nor any power to shape their own future. In other words, homogenization closes the door of hope against the victims.

The bright light of future falls upon the victims when they begin to see the prospects of their identity and difference being recognized and affirmed. It is understandable, then, why the claims of the oppressed identities are coupled with the assertion of *difference*. They care to distinguish themselves from others, particularly so when the assimilationist policies are sought to be imposed on them as a solution to their problems. In this situation, the affirmation of difference is a weapon against facile integration. The difference also becomes the entitlement, specially when this difference is the result of a history of discrimination and disadvantages. More importantly, the assertion of difference is the way through which the victims and marginal peoples come to consciously perceive and acknowledge their collective selves.² In other words, the *difference* is crucial for the construction of their subjecthood as the principal agent for shaping their own future. In short, like community, *difference* remains the unanswered question of the victims, and that is why pluralism means hope for them.

3. Taming the Economic Leviathan

Like the sorcerer who is unable to control the powers from the nether world he himself has unleashed through his spells, so too the magic of globalization has brought about economic situations which are going out of bounds and control. To bring under control the eccentricities of contemporary economy appears to me as one of the greatest challenges facing us at the dawn of the new century. This is an issue which has remained unanswered throughout the last decades of the twentieth century. For the victims, moving towards new horizons of hope will depend very much on the domestication of economy which has turned violent on them.

Taking a long range view of things, we can say that the last one thousand years (the second millennium) saw the struggles to

2 Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Religious Pluralism and Secular Humanism. Implications for Theological Education in Asia" (A paper presented at the 8th Assembly of C.O.C.T.I, held at the University of Louvain, 5 – 10 August, 1999. Publication shortly).

demolish legitimized political despotism and autocracy. In fact, emperors, kings and rulers were thought to have been vested with unlimited powers. Religions, very often, legitimized the exercise of such a power. We need only to think of the theory of the divine right of kings and the collusion between the *ancien régime* and religion. The human rights tradition as well as democracy have been for long in gestation, challenging increasingly the political absolutism. The many struggles and revolts of the ordinary people affected by such irresponsible exercise of power contributed greatly to the emergence of democracy and human rights, which represented hope for humanity. Obviously, there is still a long way to go.

It appears to me that today we are again in a very crucial period. The third millennium is one in which we may have to pass through the ordeals of the second millennium, but in a different field. Today, we face the question of how to tame the economic Leviathan, how to overcome the dehumanization caused by the present economic system and the model of development. The way this question is answered and the efforts taken to control economy, market, capital etc., will also shape the future prospects of the victims.

There is a ray of hope for the change of things. The myth that the capitalist economy could indefinitely hold out surviving all challenges and crisis, is today being exploded. The way it functions will ultimately cause its own self-destruction. Such a conviction is growing even among high officials at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. This loss of self-confidence of the system augurs well for the victims, even though it is not clear how this new-found conviction will find practical implementation.

4. Consolidation of Participatory Democracy

Even as we grapple with the question of how to control economy, we need to consolidate further what has been achieved and to relate it to the plight of the victims. As I noted earlier, democracy is the end result of one thousand years of history full of struggles. In India, in retrospect, what we find remarkable in the post-Independence years is that we have retained the ballot-box. This is no small achievement considering how, many countries which began with democratic ideals, gave them up and chose authoritarian ways for the sake of development. This is what we are experiencing in several of our neighbouring nations in South Asia as well as in South East

Asia. If by trading off democracy development of the poor could be achieved, this is certainly a case of illusion. Experience proves more and more that there is a direct co-relation between all-round human growth of the victims and democratic practice. Democracy has raised the self-confidence of the victims. Studies show that, in spite of many lapses, the faith of the people in democracy has increased and this is particularly the case with the poorer sections of the society. They believe that they could shape things through democratic practice.

Democracy for the common Indian is something he would not like to see replaced even if another system is offered to him on grounds of quicker solution to his problems. The dissatisfaction and alienation from the leaders, parties, and certain institutions do not, in their eyes, discredit democracy as a system of governance. When it was put to them that if there were no parties and elections were not held, did they think that the government of the country would run better, the suggestion was summarily rejected. Close to 70 percent of the people said no and only 11 per cent thought that it would run better.³

It is logical then that *the solution to the woes of democracy today is not less democracy, but more democracy*. This needs to be highlighted, because the elites are becoming sceptical of democracy. For them, the world, like economy is a matter of management. The victims instead bank on participation and democracy because these are the avenues following which their lot is likely to improve. For, issues like literacy, health-care, primary education, housing, etc., can be solved only when we have a true democratic practice at work.⁴

It is a fact that those who fall prey to the communal frenzy and bear the brunt of it are the poor and the marginalized. They become the target of communal violence. It is time that we saw the relation between communalism and the absence of democracy at the grassroots. The real answer to the question of communalism is to strengthen the democratic means and structures. In her recent work

3 Javeed Alam, "What is happening inside Indian Democracy", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, September, 11, 1999, p. 2650.

4 *Ibid.*

Neera Chandhoke has put forward the thesis that in multi-cultural societies like India, we may not reach an appropriate solution by simply invoking secularism. According to her, the rights of the minorities, for example, will be best taken care of when it is based on democratic equality. She observes:

"[T]he principle of secularism is not self-validating, for we can justify it only when we derive it from, and validate it by reference to the antecedent moral principle of democratic equality. ...[A] polity will be logically committed to treating all religious groups equally *only when it is antecedently committed to the generic principle of equality*. If a polity is not so committed, there is little reason to believe that it will be under any compulsion to see that minority groups are not discriminated against, or that majorities are not privileged.⁵

In short, the foundations of democracy and equality need to be strengthened, failing which the poor will be exposed more and more to the destructive forces of communalism. Their hope and prospects for the future are safeguarded when communalism is challenged in the name of democracy and equality.

5. Ascent to Fuller Humanization

How much we have really become human is the disturbing question of the victims at the dawn of the new century. The century that has elapsed could boast of many achievements of human ingenuity. All these may give the false image of a humanity in continuous progress. We come to a sober realization of where we are when we look at the misery and destitution that characterize the life of the majority of the people on the globe. Year after year, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) comes out with disconcerting facts about the scandalous inequality that characterize our world and our societies.⁶ As long as this situation continues, no one can really talk of real progress. The mark of progress is the movement towards fuller humanization. Fuller humanization remains the unanswered question of the victims, and at the same time it is

5 Neera Chandhoke, *Beyond Secularism. The Rights of Religious Minorities*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999, p.4.

6 Cf *Human Development Report, 1999, 1998*, Oxford University Press, Delhi; *Human Development Report 1997*, Oxford University Press, New York.

their agenda for the new century. Interestingly, it is this agenda which is going to save the world and humanity, and not that of the market and of the powers that be.

For fuller humanization to happen, first of all conditions must be created which will lead to the fulfilment of the basic needs of life which the victims are negated. It calls for a multi-pronged approach, and indeed on many fronts.⁷ The trouble with globalization is that it seems to believe the future of the world to be in the net-working of the entire globe, and forgets the primary question of survival which is that of the victims. In short, the question of the victims is not of globalization but fuller humanization through community, pluralism, participation, equality and justice. The process of globalization does not coincide with the victims agenda of humanization.

II

Demolitions and Deconstructions

The prospects of victims' agenda being realized will depend upon much needed demolitions and deconstructions. The new cannot be simply a patch-work, but something radically different. In concrete, the foundation for a dignified life of the victims requires that we unmask the present order of things whose fascinating name is "globalization". This will pave the way for hope to appear on the horizon of the victims.

Five Grand Deceptions

As I noted earlier, today the victims of globalization interrogate the way it functions. Every temptation has its own magic lure and glittering appearance. In fact, we live in a world of make-believe and cosmetic-adjustments. What constitutes fascination of globalization in terms of process (apart from the personal attraction deriving from vested interests) is the fact that it *appears* to bring together peoples, countries, institutions, etc. In this sense, it enjoys certain respectability and furnishes a very potent argument to the defenders

7 A very important ingredient in fuller humanization is *care*. Care is needed not only for children, the old and the weak, but as well for the adults in their routine life and transaction. The atmosphere of care is as much important as clean environment for the life and survival of humanity. We can extend this consideration to the plight of the victims. Caring for them and the growth of their capabilities is an important priority in this century.

of present-day globalization. But the truth is far from it. I would highlight here five deceptions to which the victims are subjected, and they all need to be unmasked and deconstructed.

1. The Illusion of Unity

Who can really counter a process which appears to bring about unity of the world, of humanity? In fact, the modern global capitalist process - the economic driving force today - involves interaction among more and more people distant from one another in terms of geography, culture, language, religion, etc. With the production of goods globally linked, the capital too crosses mountains and seas, societies and nations. The political and cultural borders become fluid. There is a grand global sweep of capitalism which seems to achieve what moral persuasion and other efforts to unite people transnationally have not achieved. Here precisely is the grand deception. The reality is that we are living in a world in which conflicts of every kind is in escalation. Religious, linguistic, regional and ethnic identities confront each other and clash with violence. The appearance of unity is only skin-deep. If we scratch a little, what we have is a dismal picture of divisions. We have a world which was never before so divided as now. Such a world cannot signify any hope for the victims.

2. The Appearance of Growth

Speculation is something very much associated with capitalism. What matters is not an economy based on production. Instead what is gaining ground is a fictitious economy which is nurtured by speculation about the financial capital, stocks, shares etc. This is the second deceptive element in globalization. Here, as in the world of imagination, economy "grows", without the poor growing, nations become rich without its poor ever becoming richer. In this context, we need also to be attentive to the way growth is measured. Generally what counts is the Gross National Product (GNP). It is on this scale the growth of a country is measured. Experience amply bears out that the GNP may show impressive figures without the condition of the poor having improved in any way.⁸

8 A silver lining is the change that is taking place in the measurement of growth. New scales and Human Development Index have been developed which go beyond mere economic growth. Factors such as literacy, health, etc. are taken into account in assessing the growth of a nation. The United Nations Development Reports today pay attention to the new scales to measure the development of a country.

3. Programmes of Cover-up

A third form of deception is the one connected with certain programmes which facilitate the economic globalization. The so-called Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) have been introduced apparently to benefit the developing countries, but it turns out to be in fact a global fraud inflicted on the poor and the weak. It is the exploitation of a country in trouble. The main actors of these programmes are the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Structural Adjustment Programmes demand from the poor countries liberalization in importing goods, which means destruction of the local industries and employment. It calls for liberalization in investment, which entails reduction of wages. Further, the Structural Adjustment Programme demands financial market liberalization and it leads to devaluation of currency. Devaluation of currency is used as a strategy to make exports competitive among the poor and developing countries. It is a mechanism by which the poor countries seek to destroy each other by offering very competitive price for their products. It means that the poor workers have to content themselves with ever smaller amounts as compensation, and the producers will get ever lesser price for their goods.

Finally, the state itself is dictated by the Structural Adjustment Programmes. It is forced to deregulate or loose its control over market and economy which are to be handed over to private players operating internationally. And what is worse, the states are forced to cut the subsidies for food and other goods from which the poor benefit. And this reduction in government spending is made in such crucial areas as education, health-care and social welfare. What is curious is that, in spite of all these in-built elements of peripheralization of the poor and the weak, the system and its perpetrators circulate globally well-orchestrated lies from which they benefit.

4. Corporations of Disruption

Yet another form of deception is constituted by the extended arms of the global economy - the Transnational Corporations (TNC's). It is a well-known fact that some of these corporations have income that surpasses the gross income of many poor countries. These transnational bodies present themselves as helping the poor nations progress economically, but are in fact forces of disruption. The ways

of their operation and profit-making continue to create new victims, as more and more people are thrown out of their traditional occupations on which their livelihood depended. One of the worst thing is the control of the entire agricultural sector so very vital for the ordinary people. In pricing the products too there are crafty ways of deceiving the consumers.

Whatever may be the production pattern, the main focus of the MNCs [Multinational Corporations] is on exercising control over marketing. Because of the size of their operations, MNCs have a tendency to become monopolies. Where this is not possible, the second best alternative is practically always resorted to: that of becoming oligopolies, that is, one of just a few big firms competing in the market, but with clearly differentiated products, giving a semblance of choice to the buyers. The attempt here is to 'set the price to the producers' (and sellers') advantage. In the oligopolistic context prices are basically administered prices, usually determined by the collusive decisions of the competitors. Hence, even if there is an element of competition in these prices, the competition is not of the kind that leads to 'efficient prices' which are supposedly close to the cost of production.⁹

We see then, how through all these complex means the victims who happen to be also the ones who through their hard labour contribute to the economy of the country are exploited and how their livelihood is disrupted. Here again the point to note is the illusion created that everything is done to the best interests of the poor and the poor countries.

5. Forced Consensus and Fraudulent Trade

Finally another fraud on the poor of the globe is perpetrated by the system of World Trade which is supposed to be a "level playing field", but as a matter of fact the most iniquitous form of exchange we have. Poor nations are bullied and forced to consent to bilateral and multilateral trade arrangements which go against their interests. There are many aspects to this kind of trade. First of all there is the weak bargaining position of the poor countries who are overpowered

9 C.T. Kurien, *Global Capitalism and the Indian Economy*, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 1994, p. 63.

by the rich ones. A strong protectionism on the part of the nations of the North lead to flagrant double standards. While free access to the goods from the rich countries are claimed in the name of a globalizing world without frontiers, when it comes to import from the poor countries, all kinds of insidious trade-barriers and restrictions are imposed. One does not want to see that such measures blatantly contradict the capitalist principle of "free-trade". Obviously freedom of trade here is only one-sided, and it is good as long as it is advantageous to the rich nations.

As was clear in the Uruguay Round of GAAT, the MNCs made use of the rich nations to penetrate into the poor nations and to liberalize the trade to their advantage. Yet another form of fraud is connected with monopoly on Intellectual Property Rights. What is meant to protect the rights of the inventors for a brief period is exploited by the global vested interests and converted into an arrangement that will give them the monopoly over certain products because of the technological knowledge implied in it. Many natural products in the poor countries are brought under this arrangement. Curiously under such fictitious arrangements, the poor pay property rights for things which are their own and which grow around them. The case in point is certain varieties of rice and products from neem leaves in the Asian countries. The latest World Trade Organization (WTO) has so many agreements which consolidate such measures and incapacitate further the poor countries from any equitable bargaining.

A close reading of the WTO shows it to be clearly a highly inequitable agreement. It was approved only because it was not a negotiation among equals.... We must remember that during the 8 years of negotiation of the WTO Agreement, the WB/IMF imposed a total of over 500 SAPs [Structural Adjustment Programmes] on the negotiating parties...Only strong hand tactics...could have made countries sign such an Agreement that now legitimizes the existence of the WTO. In some countries, these strong hand tactics have been internalized as the ideology of modernization.¹⁰

10 Nicanor Perlas, "Economic Globalization: Implications for the Church", in *Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21st Century*, Office for Human Development – FABC, Manila, n.d., p.77.

There are many such issues which, in sum, are meant to create a make-believe world that globalization and its transnational trade are the paths best suited for the victims. But unfortunately, they contain no hope for the poor and the victims of the present order of things.

III

Hope-Generating Christian Praxis

The victims are not people simply pushed to the fringes, to the margins. They are active subjects. It is in the determination on the part of the victims to stand up – like David with his sling – against the mighty Goliaths of our present world, that we see the emergence of hope for the new century. A continuous world-wide challenge to the present system is bound to bear fruit.

Christianity can contribute significantly to the project of the victims to see a world with greater hope and prospects. Religions, after all, have immense motivating force. Besides, they play a crucial role in the symbolic construction of the world, which in turn, determine the behaviour patterns. In what ways could Christian faith contribute to the agenda of the victims? We will begin our reflections from a wider perspective.

1. The Mystery of Hope

We need to probe deeper into what appears to be a mystery lurking behind the dreams and hopes of the victims. The Greek myth of Sisyphus is the symbol of a human situation signifying the futility of even the best human struggles to conquer the inevitable. It is here that we realize the transcendent or better trans-rational dimension of hope.

Hope is something that breaks the framework of causality. From a logical point of view, there is a proportion between cause and effect. This is the mainstay of those who think in terms of system and order which unfortunately leaves little room for hope. In other words, what is claimed is a life without surprises! But when the effect far surpasses what is apparently the cause, and reverses the logical order - an experience that is part and parcel of human life - we are left with a sense of amazement and wonder. Here we are in the realm of hope and its mystery. Moreover, human history itself amply bears witness

how the most unpredictable burst into the theatre of human life falsifying all ready-made scripts. Concurring with this seem to be the conclusions of physical sciences postulating a principle of indeterminacy as part and parcel of even material reality.¹¹

2. Religious Interpretation

Religions have interpreted this experience from a transcendental point of view. When the Israelites, their powerlessness in every way (Dt 7: 17- 20) notwithstanding, were led to experience wondrous things, they viewed it in faith as the hand of God guiding them. Hope became the never-receding horizon in their lives. Individual stories like that of Joseph (Gen 37:12ff) and Daniel (Dan 6: 1-29), and visions like that of Ezekiel (Ezek 37:1-14) of the dry bones nurtured unshakable confidence in a future God had in store for his people. In the words of Walter Brueggemann, "Old Testament is fundamentally a literature of hope".¹²

The mystery and transcendence in the experience of hope can be seen in many Asian traditions. All over Asia religious wellsprings of hope abound. Running through the Asian religious universe is the theme of the powerless conquering the mighty, the good ultimately triumphing over the powers of evil. Among many Asian peoples, popular celebration connected with myths inspired by this vision are occasions for a general renewal of hope. These stories and myths have also great significance as strategies for survival in the midst of odds. Particularly important are the myths of avatars of Vishnu in Hinduism. Avatars are stories of divine intervention to support the human family and the whole creation on its path to ultimate fullness and wholeness, and these occur, as the Bhagavad Gita notes,

11 Cf Jayant V.Narlikar, "Quantum Uncertainty and the Response of the Universe", in *Philosophy of Science. Perspectives from Natural and Social Sciences*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1992, pp. 69-76; Kamala Datta, "Determinism and Chaos in Classical and Quantum Physics", *Ibid.*, pp. 77-85; D.S.Chattopadhyaya, "Chance and Determinism" *Ibid.* pp.105 - 117.

12 Walter Brueggemann, *Hope within History*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1987, p. 72; ID., *Hopeful Imagination. Prophetic Voices in Exile*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1988; cf also M.Maria Arul Raja, "Assertion of the Periphery. Some Biblical Paradigms", in *Jeevadhara*, 1997, pp. 25 - 35.

whenever *dharma* (righteousness) declines and *adharma* (unrighteousness) reigns over the world.¹³ According to Hindu belief, the present age is a *kaliyuga* - an age of great calamity, misery, pain and hopelessness. A transformation in the present order of things is expected through the arrival of the final divine avatar which is known as *kalkin*. The ultimate hope towards which one needs to move is the *lokasamgraha* or the well-being of all and of the entire cosmos.

3. Fulfilment of Earthly Hopes

If the option for the poor and marginalized has any effective meaning, it needs to show itself in our stance in the face of the present economy - the liberal capitalist economy which is the hub of the process of globalization. Neo-liberal economy and the process of globalization are diametrically opposed to the Christian ideal of option for the poor. No Christian can be a silent supporter of a system which excludes the poor and yet claim to opt for the poor. I say 'silent supporter', because our lack of taking a stance amounts to support. We need to realize today that option for the poor means necessarily also an option against an economic system that continues to create more and more victims, more and more uprooted people, alienated cultures; it disintegrates communities and destroys the natural environment.

We know that the fulfillment of historical and earthly hopes are not opposed to the integral Christian vision of the future. In fact, the Old Testament vibrates with the expectations of the people in what concerns their physical needs and well-being (cf Lev 26:3-13). Jesus himself was so very attentive to human suffering and ailments, material needs and daily bread. Even though there takes place a certain "spiritualization" in the later New Testament period, nevertheless, it did not amount to the neglect of the material needs of human beings.

The focus on the poor in Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God, the inextricable unity between love of neighbour and love of God,

13 *Bhagavadgita* IV, 7-8.: Lord Krishna speaks to Arjuna "Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness... then I send forth (create, incarnate) Myself". Cf Geoffrey Parrinder, *Avatar and Incarnation. A Comparison of Indian and Christian Belief*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982.

the early Christian position regarding private possessions, and the realization in the Middle Ages that the poor are the vicars of Christ (Mt. 25:31-45)¹⁴ - all these attest to the power of Christian life and message to awaken hope among the victims. Christianity gives life to them in as much as it gives hope by living out the implications of the Gospel. It is interesting to note that the poor found hope in early Christianity, because it made theirs what were considered to be the privileges of the elite: freedom, knowledge, power, community, etc.

Authentic Christian life needs a praxis of hope that would move from accumulation to emptiness, from individualism to hope-conferring solidarity, from distrust to positive appreciation of the human, from conformism to imagining alternatives. In this way, Christian faith will give concrete shape to God's hope for the victims of history and contribute to the realization of their agenda. We understand best the Christian contribution by placing it in the context of Asian heritage.

i) Accumulation vs Emptiness

For the Christian praxis to be able to give hope, it needs to be interpreted through the praxis of emptiness. Speaking in terms of fullness which can easily tend to exclusion and arrogance, and acting from a sense of possession, may not come across to the victims as paths to hope.

Since Plato Western religious thought has emphasized being as the ideal end of becoming. Asian thought, by comparison, has often posited an ultimate emptiness of individuating features, such that despair more typically has been despair at continuing to be as one is.¹⁵

The theme of *kenosis* or emptiness in Christian tradition in this sense is very Asian. It is an act of freedom by which one empties oneself to be able to give, after the example of Jesus. For, as the Asian tradition knows it well, what is not given is lost. Ultimately the self-abnegation and emptying is the source of hope. It means it is the situation of possession which is one of despair and not of hope. Voluntary dispossession, on the contrary, is the beginning of hope

14 Cf Michel Mollat, *Les Pauvres Au Moyen Age*, Hachette, 1978.

15 Cf Mircea Eliade (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 6, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York - London, 1987, p.461.

not only for oneself but also for the world. This is something so very much part of Jesus' own teaching. "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk 12:15).

This contrasts with the philosophy of liberal economic tradition according to which the future lies in the cultivation of self-interest and accumulation of wealth. If this is practiced, it believes, that in a mysterious way, "the invisible hands" will ultimately see to the good of one and all in the society. In the words of Adam Smith,

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.¹⁶

It is this philosophy of endless seeking and self-gratification that goes counter both to the Christian tradition of hope as well as the Asian source of hope in emptiness and abnegation. I am reminded, in this connection, of a discussion I had some years ago with a group of Western theologians on the theme of eschatology. Statistics were quoted to say that a high percentage of Westerners believe in rebirth, which most naturally brought into discussion the influence of Eastern religious traditions on this state of affairs. At this point, I had to intervene and point out the difference between the belief in rebirth in a consumer society and the spiritual dimension connected with it in the Eastern religious traditions. In a consumer society, the rebirth may have little to do with religion and spirituality; it is the yearning to have more births, for one life is too short to enjoy all the goodies offered by the contemporary consumer society! On the other hand, a devout Hindu prays not for rebirth but for the cessation of rebirths with which is connected the hope of ultimate bliss.

ii) Individualism vs Hope-conferring Solidarity

A second important spiritual dimension of Christian hope is a proactive solidarity with those who are humanly in hopeless situation of manifold negations. These negations can be overcome by a self-abnegation that expresses itself as solidarity with the

16 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Modern Library, New York, 1937 (first published in 1776), p.14.

marginalized. As we saw, solidarity or community remains an unanswered question of the victims. The central Christian belief that God has identified his very self with the suffering humanity and he is their abiding defence is the most encouraging and hope-conferring truth. The witness of Christian communities to this truth and a corresponding praxis can make the contemporary community of Jesus' disciples truly sacraments of hope. This solidarity is exercised by the Church when it transgresses all conventional borders and all kinds of sectarian identities; when, like Jesus, it breaks the division between pure and impure and touches the "untouchable" and overcomes every kind of exclusions in the society and in its own life. True to the Asian holistic vision of reality, this solidarity should extend also to all forms of life and to the entire nature. There is no hope for humanity without hope for the whole creation, the cosmos.

iii) Distrust vs Positive appreciation of Human nature

It is obvious that only a spiritual message that rests on a basically positive appreciation of human nature will be in a position to kindle hope in the minds and hearts of the victims. Human beings, obviously, are inclined to evil and perversity.¹⁷ But when this becomes the basis, instead of hope, cynicism and manipulation enter the field. The positive appreciation of the human nature should be visible not only in the life of Christian communities, but as well in the institutional and administrative apparatuses meant to facilitate Christian living. These too have a responsibility to bear witness to the Christian hope by a more trusting attitude and a sense of characteristic Christian optimism. Any spiritual Machiavellianism that builds on a negative conception of the human will be abhorred in Asia and stands little chance of being taken seriously.

The belief in the God-given inherent potentiality of human beings

17 This is the corner-stone of Machiavelli's political thought. Addressing the question whether it is good for a prince to be loved or feared, he notes, how men are "ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger and covetous of gain". Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, The Modern Library, New York, 1950, chap. XVII, p. 61. For a comparison of Erasmus, Machiavelli and Luther on human nature, cf Felix Wilfred, "Erasmus, the *Rishi*, Between Scylla and Charybdis. A Renaissance Humanist's Dilemmas of Power" (A paper presented at an international conference of social sciences on the theme "Rethinking Power and Freedom" held at the T.M.A.M. Research and Orientation Centre, Kottayam, April 5 - 8, 1999).

to tend towards him, and the realization that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) need to shape also the Christian attitude towards their neighbours of different religious traditions. If Asian Christians do not respect the human and religious experiences of others living with them, how could they expect to be agents of hope to the victims in their midst? We should not forget the fact that the overwhelming majority of these victims belong to other religious traditions.

iv) Conformism vs Creative Alternatives

Any agent of hope needs to have a fertile imagination; the end of imagination is the end of hope. For in times of despair and no-way-out situations, rays of hope are brought to our horizon by contriving alternatives. The victims require such agents of hope with imagination, and this applies also to the Christian communities, if they intend to be servants of hope for the poor and the suffering.

The greatest danger to this inspiring task is the temptation to conformism which stunts the imagination. The security of the trodden path is the enemy of the wondrous new vistas and the promised land. What would be expected of the disciples of Jesus is that they be trail-blazers, and that they have the ability to create new avenues where everything seems to end. The worst thing that could happen is the feeling of resignation, or what is called the "TINA syndrome" (Noam Chomsky) - There Is No Alternative. To believe in any such thing is to despair about the capacity of human beings and disbelief in the unpredictable ways of divine grace.

Conclusion

"There are a Thousand Suns Beyond the Clouds", so goes a South Indian proverb, which inspired the title for a very fascinating book by the well-known French-writer Dominique Lapierre.¹⁸ The victims of our history dream of something concealed to the eyes of the rulers of our present world. For those who are satisfied, there is no hope and no surprises. For them, the end of history has come, because they believe what we live today is the best possible condition. For the rulers of the present world, with the victory of capitalism and liberal economy we have reached the last and definite stage of human

18 Dominique Lapierre, *A Thousand Suns*, Full Circle, Delhi, 1999

history. It is in this situation of being saturated and satisfied the voice of the victims make itself heard, and it speaks of something new and different, more humane and compassionate. The victims are the bearers of real hope for the whole of human family.

The achievements of science and technology do not impress the victims who continue to suffer from want and destitution. They have their own questions to pose to the present order of the world and its rulers. The hopes and dreams of the victims are for a world of human solidarity and togetherness, authentic community and sharing. They dream for a situation of plurality in which their very selfhood and identity will be recognized and affirmed. The agenda of the victims begins with the challenge to the dominant liberal economy and the myths created by it and the process of globalization. The victims call for a political order that is truly democratic and participatory. For, development without democracy will not contribute to the realization of their dreams for fuller humanization.

Christian hope is based on the mystery of God's self-identification with the suffering humanity. It is the situation of poverty and powerlessness which have great potential of hope. The poor are called "blessed" by Jesus (Lk 6:20), because it is they who ardently expect a change of the present conditions symbolized in the arrival of God's Kingdom. It concerns as much the matters of "daily bread" (fulfilment of earthly hopes) as forgiveness and reconciliation. To follow the dreams and agenda of the victims is to follow the path of God's Kingdom. The victims call for a radical conversion - from accumulation of wealth to a culture of voluntary dispossession as condition for a humane world. At the root of the drive for accumulation and possession is an individualistic vision of human beings, and hence the importance of cultivating hope-conferring solidarity at all levels. The dream of the victims go in the line of creating a world which will have great trust in human beings and will not be based on the instincts of egoism. Finally, the realization of the hopes and dreams of the victims calls for greater imagination and unrelenting exploration of alternatives. Those who journey with the victims will enter a new and transformed world, and all others will be left behind in the old and decaying world.

University of Madras

Chennai

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Development with a Human Face

K. Shanthi

Professor of Econometrics in the University of Madras. Dr. Shanthi presents in this article the profile of development which has missed the 'human' component. Human development depends on the direction and range of reforms in the social sector. For the sustainability of economic growth, human capabilities should be expanded. This is the challenge to be met in the new century. In particular, the economic, social, political and cultural deprivation suffered by women needs to be addressed. The agenda of the future should emerge from the experience of women, who are the most severely affected victims of the present model of development.

Introduction

The term 'development' is understood differently by different people. In its narrow sense, it means 'economic growth' or 'economic prosperity'. But in the broad sense, it refers to 'total development' encompassing the social, political, cultural, economic and spiritual well-being of the individuals in the society. Development should also be *sustainable*. Unfortunately the type of development that has taken place is one of material prosperity at the cost of social, environmental and cultural well being. 'Where is the humanity leading to?' is the moot question which is to be posed, probed, debated and consensus arrived at. A peep into the past may not only throw light on the existing realities, but also indicate the future course of action.

Closed Development Model of India

To safeguard its hard-won political freedom, India followed a strategy of 'import substitution industrialisation' also known as 'inward looking strategy' for its economic advancement. With lot of restrictions on imports and foreign capital, India promoted a closed development strategy hoping to be self-reliant in all spheres one day. In view of the absence of a vibrant private sector the government had to play a major role in initiating economic development. A huge public sector came into existence. India wanted to combine the merits of Capitalism (the private sector) with those of Socialism (the public

sector), and enjoy the benefits of both by introducing the 'Mixed Economy' concept. But unfortunately it reaped the disadvantages of both inviting IMF intervention to set right its economy. The public sector, by and large, was mismanaged. It incurred huge losses and its managerial efficiency came in for severe criticism. Political interference, bureaucratic delay in decision making, favouritism, were the other ills which afflicted the public enterprises.

As a result, the rate of return on the total public sector investment in India was less than one percent, while the rate of return in the private sector was around ten percent. Diversion of budgetary funds to sustain the loss-making units to protect the huge labour employed in those units led to persistent gap in the budget which could not be prolonged indefinitely. Protection of local industries by imposing heavy duties on imports led to the creation of costly industrial structures in India. The producers had least priority for the quality of the product and cost reduction. By and large, Indian goods were less competitive in the international market. Export growth was not sufficient enough to meet the heavy import bill required for diversification of the industrial structure.

Coupled with these economic problems were the mismanagement of funds, consecutive elections, corruption of high magnitude at all levels, inefficiency, clamour for higher wages not backed by productivity increase, high military expenditures, and expenses on populist programmes. A situation came when India did not have foreign exchange even to pay for two weeks imports and IMF intervention became inevitable. Having accepted the emergency credit extended by IMF India had no other alternative except to surrender to the conditionalities laid down by the IMF.

The basic aims of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) are macro economic stability, integration of the local economy with the global economy and increase in economic efficiency. The measures adopted to achieve these goals include encouraging greater participation of the private sector, disinvestment in state owned public sector enterprises, deregulation of industries, liberalisation of foreign trade and foreign investment and changes in fiscal policy. But the questions posed by the critics are:

- a. Why liberalisation at one stroke of pen? Why cannot it be in phases?

- b. Are our Indian industries prepared for competition from foreign industries and what will happen if multinationals enter in a large number?
- c. What is the guarantee that liberalisation will lead to fair competition? What is the guarantee that it will not lead to development of oligopolistic and monopolistic market structures?
- d. Will the foreign investors be interested in the long term economic development of India? What will happen if they make quick gains and leave abruptly?
- e. Will the technology to be adopted by the foreign investors be employment friendly?

There are so many other such questions which time alone can answer. The experiences of other countries, particularly those of Africa and Latin America, clearly indicate that the immediate consequences of liberalisation are decrease in nutritional standards, increased morbidity/child mortality, reduced public expenditure on food (food subsidy), health and education, a drop in real wage, increase in the incidence of child labour, diversion of land from food to cash crops, etc.

The Indian experience in the last nine years under the New Economic Policy is not different from that of others. Unemployment is steeply on the increase and the casualisation of labour force is rapid. Because of the capital intensive nature of economic development, already the job creation was low in the organised sector. Now, with the introduction of SAP, large scale retrenchments are going on in the name of 'Golden Handshake' and 'Voluntary Retirement Scheme'. Between 1991-94 it is estimated that about 75,000 in the public sector and 1,25,000 in the private sector have been sent out¹. The concern expressed by the critics of liberalisation is well founded when one analyses the possible outcomes in the context of existing grim realities on the poverty and employment fronts.

1. Bhattacharya. N., 1997 'Finest Manifestation of Globalisation', *Mainstream* March 15.

Existing Scenario

Under the old economic policy of 'protective development' (inward looking strategy) the 'human side' had been forgotten is quite evident from the growth in the number of the poor and the intensity of unemployment. If we take the issue of poverty the extent of poverty is usually measured by the number of people who earn less than what is required for minimum subsistence. But this is not a comprehensive measure, since it does not encompass the other essential variables such as housing, clothing, and education. So a new measure viz. Human Deprivation Measure (HDM) which is based on deprivation in health education and income was worked out for the four countries in the South Asian Region viz Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka² (Appendix Table 1). The figures clearly indicate that by its sheer absolute number (361 million) India stands out unique causing much concern³. Consider some of the other grim realities.

Admitting the possibility of employment reduction in the short run, the UNDP report at one place says "The quality of India's labour force is limited by the levels of human development. Liberalisation and globalisation create compulsions for raising productivity levels which could hurt employment growth. There could be a reduction in employment content of growth in critical sectors ('jobless growth syndrome'). The crucial issue is employment intensity of growth. This depends on the composition of growth, over which the state, in an increasingly market-determined scenario, cannot have much control. Compulsion to raise productivity levels so as to improve efficiency and competitiveness may not permit significant increase in employment elasticities in many lines of work. Employment content of aggregate growth depends on whether or not the pattern of growth is such that sectors with relatively higher employment intensity make

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2. The Human Development Measure is the poverty of basic human capabilities which prevents people from taking advantage of market capabilities. Health deprivation is measured by the lack of access to safe drinking water and underweight children under five educational deprivation by adult illiteracy and children not at school and income deprivation by the usual estimate of the population proportion not earning the minimum required for subsistence. (*Mahbub Ul Haq 1997* 'Human Development in South Asia' Oxford University Press Pakistan - A Publication for the Human Development Centre, Karachi).

3. Ibid.

an increasingly larger contribution by growing faster than other sectors with low employment elasticities.

In the case of India, agriculture and the modern manufacturing sectors have low employment elasticity, and it would not be easy to increase it significantly in the near future. Therefore, the unorganised sector, with its large scope for self-employment, must expand rapidly in order to create the additional jobs. This, in turn, implies that human capabilities, especially of those whose livelihood depend on self-employment, and who constitute a significant proportion of the population with severe deprivations, must expand rapidly⁴.

One sign of economic development is graduation of a major segment of the labour force from the unorganised sector to the organised sector where labour welfare is taken care of. But unfortunately in India, the reverse process is happening, causing heavy casualisation of labour. Casualisation of labour is accompanied by feminisation of the labour force as well. Increasing feminisation of labour has manifested itself in a fall in male employment, women's income and job security. For these uneducated, unskilled women employed in the unorganised sector 'work' is not 'emancipating' or 'empowering', but rather a misery, a double burden, a 'day-in' and a 'day-out'. Multinational companies are keen in exploiting such cheap labour by sub-contracting the various production processes. India has failed to create a strong educated, skilled, vibrant labour force.

Eclipse of the Human

How much of the human side of development has been lost is evident from the fact that while South Korea and Malaysia spend around \$130 a year per person on human priority areas of basic education, primary health care, family planning, safe drinking water and nutritional programmes, India spends \$9 a year for the same⁵. In India about 75 million children (of which 54 million are girls) are not in school. Nearly 70 million children under five are malnourished. About 200 million people are without access to safe drinking water. As per the 1995 Human Development Report, India with a Human

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4. UNDP 1997 'India: The Road to Human Development' June 1997 New Delhi pp 12-13.
 5. Mahbub Ul Haq 1996 'Human Development Paradigm' Part II. *The Hindu* Feb 13 1996.

Development Index of 0.439 ranked 134 in the world⁶. It is a pity that India which has nearly one third of the world's absolute poor receives less than five percent of total Official Development Assistance (ODA). But still worse is the fact that less than seven percent of bilateral aid and less than ten percent of multilateral aid are earmarked for priority expenditures of basic education, primary health care and safe drinking water⁷.

Women - Victims of Development

Though in theory a full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights have been guaranteed to women as done for men yet the practice of human rights monitoring is mostly in accordance with the male oriented rights hierarchy. Often civil and political rights are monitored by governments. But unfortunately social and economic rights (such as rights to food, shelter, property, health care, reproductive choice, employment etc.) which impinge on women are rarely monitored. The violations of these rights are often perceived as 'minor' offences. The artificial division of the private and public spheres wherein men invariably occupy the public or political arena and women the private sphere of family has served to downplay the violation of women's rights.

Consider some of the crude realities⁸ which spell out women's status in India.

- * The number of females per thousand males has declined in India from 972 in 1901 to 927 in 1991,
- * Discrimination against females is responsible for one out of six infant deaths.
- * Child birth accounts for 15% of all deaths among women.
- * 20% of rural households are headed by women due to widowhood desertion or male migration.

6. UNDP 1995 'Human Development Report 1995' Oxford, Oxford University Press.

7. Ibid.

8. Government of India 1995 'Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing 1995' Country Report, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept of Women and Child Development.

- * Only one in six persons employed in the organised sector is a woman and among them only about 1.2% are in private sector executive cadres.
- * 61% of women aged seven and above were illiterate in 1991.

Averages are quite misleading. The inter-district and inter-taluk variations are so high in India that no meaningful generalisations are possible. To take for example the Gender-related Development Index (GDI)⁹, Kerala tops the list with a GDI value of 0.565; Uttar Pradesh is at the bottom with a value of 0.293. There are only 13 countries in the world with lower GDI values than those of Bihar (0.306) and U.P. (0.293). But in terms of absolute numbers U.P. and Bihar have twice as many people as in the total of 13 countries (combined population of 225 million in 1991)¹⁰. These variations within a country are to be viewed seriously and have grave implications for future course of action.

At the global level women's situation is no better. According to the Human Development Report 1999, globally nearly 340 million women are not expected to survive to the age of 40, and quarter to half of all women have suffered physical abuse by an intimate partner¹¹. It is ironic that the World Bank which imposed SAP on many developing countries is also the one which funds safe motherhood projects when it is well known that impoverishment increases maternal mortality. Moreover women's bodies have become the testing ground for the population programmes of governments. In many South Asian countries flesh trade has been given a big boost with increasing number of women turning to prostitution for livelihood. The worst part of it is, nearly 15% of the prostitutes are children below sixteen. Moreover international as well as internal migration policies have encouraged trafficking in women,

9. The gender related development index reflects gender disparities in basic human capabilities and ranks 130 countries on a global scale. The top rank is enjoyed by Sweden with a GDI value of 0.92. As many as 45 countries in the sample analysis have a GDI value of less than 0.5 showing that women suffer the double deprivation of gender disparity and low achievement.

10. UNDP 1997 'India: The Road to Human Development' June 1997, New Delhi p-10

11. UNDP 1999 'Human Development Report 1999' Oxford, Oxford University Press.

a very profitable industry at low investment. This sad commentary comes after almost two decades of consistent efforts to elevate the status of women at the international as well as national levels.

Women, of course, have come a long way in their journey to equality. At least they had an opportunity to air their views. In the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992, women representatives brought to the fore front the fact that both the environment and women are resources which are vital to the pursuit of sustainable and equitable development. In the Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, the issues of male violence and battering within the domestic sphere were raised. Women again played a central role in the Population and Development Conference held in Cairo in 1994 to redefine the issue of population not as a demographic and resource issue but in terms of the health and reproductive rights of women. In the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, the importance of human centered development and the over-riding need for women in the decision making processes were highlighted. The U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 provided another forum for pulling together all the gains that had already been achieved. But unfortunately, these efforts remain as drops in the mighty ocean of subordination, discrimination and exploitation.

International Consciousness

The international consciousness is minimal to the problems of the developing countries. In fact the developed countries are drawing upon the developing countries for their continued wealth accumulation. Apparently it looks as if the developing countries are aiding the development process of the less developed countries, but in fact, they are only helping themselves to become richer and richer. To cite one simple example, between 1982 and 1990, the total resource flow from OECD countries to developing countries amounted to \$927 billion. During the same period the developing countries remitted \$1345 billion in debt service to creditor countries¹². The developing countries are trapped in the vicious circle of debt, most of the time paying only the interest and never the principal.

12. Kwa Aileen 1997 'The Right to Development as a Gender equitable and Holistic Approach to Human Rights'. *Canadian Women's Studies* Vol 15, Nos 2&3, p-94.

Developed countries have also benefited by arms sale to developing countries. Most of the industries in developing countries being extractive industries, ecological protection and sustainable resource management have become critical issues. The devastating effects on the environment have had telling effect on women in certain continents like Africa, Asia and South America, where women continue to be the main subsistence farmers/ providers of food and family's food security. The 1992 Human Development Report states that the developing countries suffer a potential annual loss of at least \$500 billion from restrictions in global markets and for capital and labour - i.e, - a market loss ten times as large as the total foreign assistance they receive each year. This is so inspite of the fact that UNDP is stressing the concept of 'Human Development' since 1990.

Loss of Values

There is a sea-change in values in public as well as in private life. Growth has led to social tensions through the polarisation of people into 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Inequality of income and wealth has promoted class consciousness and class conflicts. Inflation has further widened the gap between the poor and the rich. Social and cultural forces which are inextricably intertwined in the functioning of the economic system have witnessed dramatic changes. Values such as humility, charity, honesty and integrity in public life are fast disappearing.

Conclusion

Three broad conclusions which emerge from the above analysis are:

- a. Economic development not accompanied by social development is inherently unsustainable;
- b. Development devoid of human capacity building is incomplete and applies its own brakes;
- c. Development devoid of gender justice is again lop-sided, inherently unstable and incomplete.

It is hightime the world woke up to the realities of the situation and co-operatively work for the betterment of humanity.

Appendix Table I
Human Deprivation Measure (HDM) for South Asia

Country	Population (millions)	Health Deprivation Measure		Education Deprivation Measure		Income Deprivation Measure		Human Deprivation Measure	
		%	total (millions)	%	total (millions)	%	total (millions)	%	total (millions)
Bangladesh	115	31	36	71	84	48	55	61	70
India	902	32	288	53	479	25	226	40	361
Pakistan	113	58	77	65	86	34	45	57	76
Sri Lanka	18	44	8	17	3	22	4	31	6
South Asia (overall % total)	1168	35	409	56	652	28	330	44	514

Source: Table 1.5 Human Development in South Asia 1997.

Trojan Horse in the Global Village

V. Arul Raj

In this article the author presents us a very complex subject-matter with unusual clarity and scholarly rigour. He analyzes critically the dynamics of the market and its claims. The article enlightens us on how the victims are created by the prevalent mode of economy. The analysis contains also many insights of hope for an agenda of the victims. One such important agenda is realized when people "as communities become subject of their economy". Further important item in the agenda is to bring back power to the victims which have been shifted away from them by the global players.

1. Globalisation and Market Economy: Some Preliminary Remarks

As the new millennium dawns, the ideological battles of market economy vis-à-vis other models, particularly of the centrally planned economy, seem to have been won. Already in the last decades of the last millennium, certain key historical events that unfolded in the Western hemisphere of the world – the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the sweeping changes in Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet Union – signified the apparently final and irresistible victory of this ideology.¹ Today, the bipolar tensions of the cold war era are receding into memory, and the world is being effectively integrated into one system that has come to be known under the rubric, 'globalisation'.

Conceptualising Globalisation

Though the level of awareness and the ideological battles around globalisation reached a crescendo in recent times, the process itself is not new or something recent. It is part of a long process of political,

1 An editorial of a recent of issue of *The Economist* stated: "Ten years ago, when the fall of the Berlin wall signalled the failure of communism and other forms of autarkic central planning, it looked as if a new chance had arrived for the 5 billion poor to join the world economy and improve their lives. That chance remains." Editorial, "The Real Losers", *The Economist*, December 11, 1999.

economic and cultural domination of some countries over others through conquest and colonisation. The conceptualisation of the integration of the world, too, has a history. First it was conceived as a *binary* system of the Old and the New, or, the Primitive and the Modern world. This was around 15th century – the era of the Western discovery of the lands hitherto unknown to them.

It is obvious that the concepts of “old” and “new” or “primitive” and “modern” are ideologically loaded. It was clearly a reading of history from a Western point of view which looked down upon every other nation and culture. After the ‘binary system’ analysis, there was a second moment. This was the time of cold war. The world nations were analysed in terms of a *trinary* system of first, second and third worlds. The origin of such conceptualisation, seems to lie in the fact that the world was divided, first, into “traditional” and “modern” parts and then the modern part was divided into “communist” and “free” parts. Thus, the concepts themselves seem to derive their meaning from the reciprocal repulsion of competing ideologies rather than from the reality or their existential conditions.² Now a third moment. The process of globalisation has entered the scene. This time as an all-encompassing *unitary* vision of world societies. Though this vision operates at various levels: socio-economic-politico-cultural and so on, the substratum of this process seems to be the economic structure of the globe.

Trojan Horse in the Global Village

At the face of it, “globalisation” may not be perceived in terms of economy. It can be demonstrated that globalisation, in its scope and outreach, is as much political and cultural – linking up people in ways hitherto unheard of. In fact, it is McLuhan’s image of “global village”, more than anything else — with its information highways and network neighbourhoods, the ability to surf seamlessly on the cyber space, the accelerated growth in exchange of ideas and information, the possibility for people to engage in associations that span national borders... — has captured the attention of many. The ability to “act at distance”, as Giddens would say, or, the unprecedented “simultaneity” made possible by communication

2 T.K. Oommen, “Global Society: Diversity in Unity”, *Indian Express* (Chennai, February 15, 1996), p. 10.

networks has become the familiar face of globalisation and has attained a great measure of respectability.

Yet beneath all the glittery what we observe is a kind of economy whose global strides may not be challenged, or, much less, reversed. It is an economy defined by market system.³ Globalisation as an ideology, and liberalisation as an economic policy, call for open boundaries across nations undermining effectively the sovereignty of nation states. Transnational corporations are emerging as superpowers — not bound by rule of land on which they operate — trying to dictate the destiny of six billion people on this globe. The amazing thing about the process is that there is hardly any substantive resistance from among nation states themselves. With a crafty blend of arm-twisting tactics and neo-classical ideology which acts like sweet coating, the juggernaut of globalisation is marching on.

The “Deontological – Eschatological” of Globalisation Discourse

As mentioned earlier, the discourse of globalisation is not entirely new. But what is new may be the “deontological” character this discourse has now assumed. Deontological thinking shaped up by Kant and others gave rise to an ethical reasoning that held at least some acts as morally obligatory regardless of their consequences for human welfare. “Duty for duty’s sake” (*deon* in Greek means “duty”) became the watchword. Unlike teleological thinking that lays stress on the end or the goal of an act, deontological thinking lays stress on the act itself irrespective of what it might result in. The act itself becomes inviolable and it is only natural to perform the act. Deontological thinking is characterised by Kant’s “categorical imperatives”- unconditional commands – and something of this kind of thinking seems to lend legitimacy to the administered world in which we live. For example, in the globalised world, the most fundamental political decisions — about economy, education, use of resources, population policy, arms production – are, thanks to the

3 Market system can be more or less defined as “a form organisation of economy in which decisions on resource allocation are left to the independent decisions of the individual producers and consumers acting in their best interests without central direction.” Cf. William J. Baumol and Alan S. Blinder (ed.) *Economics: Principles And Policy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich , Inc. Fourth Edition, 1988), p. 46.

Structural Adjustment Programmes of the IMF, presented as inviolable laws, as “the nature of things” or of “reality”. One is expected to go by the laws, perform as per the dictates of the “imperatives”. No moral evaluation of the consequences is possible. The consequences of such laws are pronounced as “inevitable”.⁴

The categorical imperatives of IMF imposed on several countries under the auspices of Structural Adjustment Programmes have this deontological tone.⁵ They are:

1. Liberalise regulations covering foreign trade and tariffs and duties on imported goods, i.e. make regulations more favourable to First World importers.
2. Devalue local currencies to encourage exports.
3. Implement an anti-inflation policy (This was necessary because currency devaluation tends to stimulate inflation).
4. Introduce free market principles.⁶

That compliance with the “imperatives” resulted in a host of problems⁷ to the countries concerned was not a matter of consequence here.

The present day globalisation discourse is also characterised by shades of “eschatology”. This too has assumed the nature of an

4 Jose Miguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1986), p. 15.

5 For a fairly detailed analysis of Structural Adjustment Programme, cf. Eric Toussaint, *Your Money or Your Life! The Tyranny of Global Finance* (Mumbai: Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, 1999), pp. 122-157.

6 Cf. Paul Valley, *Bad Samaritans: First World Ethics and Third World Debt* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 170.

7 As part of the structural adjustment programme, measures to encourage foreign investment were instituted. These included guarantees that all profits could be taken out of the country by the investor. The local currency was devalued, sometimes more than once and by large amounts; this had the effect of making Third World products cheaper and therefore more attractive to foreign buyers and it also made imports more expensive, thus discouraging consumption. Government spending was cut by sacking large numbers of people employed directly by the public sector. Though introduction of free market principles was high on agenda, this was not applied to wage bargaining. Controls to keep prices down were abolished. Taxes were raised and charges were hiked for public services, such as clean water, electricity, health and schooling. Subsidies on basic foodstuffs were reduced, if not scrapped altogether.

end-time discourse calling for a decisive moral response. This was brought out clearly when World Bank economist John Page recently told at a meeting of the officials of the West Asian countries that the global economy is like the bullet train from Osaka to Tokyo. If you miss it, it's gone and there is no way to catch up. He urged them to get on board quickly by restructuring their economies.⁸ Again, in a public debate organised by the London School of Economics and Political Science, Peter Martin, Editor of the *Financial Times* held out a moral case of globalisation. For him, "the accelerated integration of previously marginalised societies is the best thing that has happened in the lifetime of the post-war generation."⁹ The process characterised by "true collaboration across borders, across societies, across cultures... has produced an enormous degree of improvement in human happiness in those countries which have taken advantage of the opportunities it provides."¹⁰ This indeed is the claim made by the global market economy that needs to be investigated.

To conclude these preliminary remarks, let me point out the two basic characteristics of the present day globalisation. First one is at the level of discourse, i.e., though the process of globalisation is at least five centuries old, the present phase of globalisation is characterised by a kind of normativity that makes it different from its earlier phases. The deontological - eschatological language that this discourse has adopted is a testimony to this fact. The second one is at level of practice, i.e., unlike the earlier forms of globalisation wherein the protagonists of the process were nation states trying to expand their area of operation, the present phase is characterised by new protagonists, viz., the international market forces represented by transnational corporations, multilateral organisations and agreements. As Felix Wilfred points out, "the mill of globalization is operated by the wind of transnational capitalism. This wind blows where it wills, and operates above all national borders."¹¹

8 David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (Kumarian Press and Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995)

9 Peter Martin, "The Moral Case of Globalisation," in *Is Globalisation Inevitable And Desirable?* A Public Debate held on May 7, 1997 under the auspices of the London School of Economics and Political Sciences.

10 *Ibid.*

2. Truth Claims of Market Economy

In the debate mentioned earlier, Peter Martin criticised all resistance to the process of globalisation as attempts “to preserve the status quo, to retain the hegemony of (the) profoundly conservative ideology” of the critics and called it “profoundly immoral”. It is possible, he said, “to opt out of globalisation, but the price that is paid is not merely an economic one. It is also a political one, because the desire to repress globalisation leads to an inevitable extension of the powers of the state and a loss of individual freedom”.¹²

The kind of reasoning that lies behind such arguments is that – to use Cyprian’s language — there is no salvation outside globalisation. This claim is not, presumably, arbitrary but based on the intrinsic nature and conditions of the market itself. Just as in the case of deontological ethics — whereby an action is considered morally good, not because the product of the action is good, but because of some characteristic of the action itself — the discourses of globalisation tend to justify global application of market mechanism by drawing one’s attention to the basic characteristics of the way market functions. This they do by drawing from the fonts of Adam Smith, the father of modern capitalism, and David Ricardo, who championed the cause of the autonomy of the market and the necessity of free trade. In other words, the principles of laissez-faire capitalism¹³ are resuscitated in order to justify its ideology of globalisation.

A Spontaneous Order led by an Invisible Hand

After the fall of command economies in most of the world, the spread of market economy was seen as the most natural thing to happen. Soon it began to assume “missiological” proportions whereby people thought it mandatory to spread the gospel of market economy. This “missiological” urge need not be seen in pejorative terms – as having been born out of contriving minds striving to take over the

11 Felix Wilfred, *Globalization and Cultures: The Other Voice*, 1995, (unpublished manuscript).

12 Peter Martin, *loc.cit.*

13 Laissez faire refers to a programme of minimal interference with the working of the market system. The term means that people should be left alone in carrying out their economic affairs. Cf. William J. Baumol and Alan S. Blinder (ed.), (1988), p. 582.

world. It is born more out of human inclination towards spontaneity, creativity and freedom. On the other hand, this is also based on a sober, "realistic" appraisal of the human mind that is self-seeking. After all, the market economy does not promise to make persons altruistic. Rather, it takes for granted the self-interest that is embedded in human nature. Yet, out of self-seeking minds is born, willy-nilly, an ambience that promotes the good of all. This is the fascinating thesis of Adam Smith's "invisible hand".

In his opus magnum, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Smith points out:

"He [every individual] generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the publick interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, *led by an invisible hand* to promote an end which was no part of it. *By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.*"¹⁴

Again, Smith is credited with the saying, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest."¹⁵ It is not in the interest of the producer or supplier that he/she loses his/her client or consumer. Thus, without ever intending positively to do good to the consumer the producer/supplier acts in a manner that is beneficial to the consumer.

From Smith's basic thesis of "invisible hand" is born the idea that market is a spontaneous order.¹⁶ By spontaneous order is meant "a 'self-organising or self-generating system' or pattern. It has not been deliberately designed or arranged. Like crystals which cannot be "produced" by arranging the atoms, or biological organisms that

14 Adam Smith, (1776 /1976), pp. 447-8, italics added.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

16 Hayek defines "order" as "a state of affairs in which a multiplicity elements are so related to each other that we may learn from our acquaintance with some spatial or temporal part of the whole to form correct expectations concerning the rest, or at least expectations which have a good chance of proving correct." Hayek, 1982: 36, quoted in Haworth, 116.

evolve, market is not something that can be "produced". They spontaneously evolve and they are self-directional and are best when left to themselves without any interference from any human agency.

Autonomy of the Market

A fundamental principle of laissez-faire capitalism is the autonomy of the market system and, the efficiency of the market is the basic article of faith. This basic principle can be phrased in other words: in answering the basic questions of scarcity and choice, resource allocation and co-ordination, the market system is more efficient than a centrally planned economy.

According to pro-market view, economic decisions are so complex that no single person or group of persons can be expected to have all the data required or the power to control or manipulate the resources available in order to achieve the result intended. But market, on the contrary, "possesses all the information necessary to organise and guide behaviour" and this is done through the mechanism of competition wherein prices act as coded information that help each individual to discover "which of the available technical methods is the most economical in the given circumstances."¹⁷ What is important in all this is that this is achieved without the participants of the game ever agreeing to some commonly held values or ends. Thus the market has established itself as a self-propelling mechanism. This self-propulsion is derived from what is known in economics as the law of supply and demand.

Market Mechanism: The Law of Supply and Demand

Against the backdrop of limited resources, the choices as to what to produce and what to consume or how much to produce and how much to consume are determined generally within the context of price system.¹⁸ To understand the price system it is important to understand its relationship to supply and demand. It is common sense that when the price of a commodity rises, the quantity demanded normally falls. This presumes that all other determinants of the quantity demanded remain constant. For example, when the

17 Alan Haworth, *Anti-libertarism: Market, Philosophy and Myth* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.116-117

18 Cf. "The Price System and the Case for Laissez-faire", *ibid.*, p. 586.

price of coffee per unit rises, it is expected that units of coffee consumed would fall. The higher the price-level, the lower the consumption-level, and vice versa. Price and demand have an inverse relationship. Presented on a graph, the demand curve tends downward making it a negative slope. In a similar way, with all other determinants of quantity supplied remaining constant, when the price of a commodity increases, the quantity supplied also increases and as the price falls, the quantity supplied also falls. This is because, the suppliers are inclined to supply more when prices are high and they tend to restrict the quantum of supply when they are low. Price and supply have a direct relationship. On the graph, the supply curve moves upward making it a positive slope. The downward movement of the demand curve and the upward movement of the supply curve have their significance in the way market fixes the prices.

State Intervention: Price-ceiling and Price-floor

So, the basic question: who fixes the price? In a centralised economy, the State or its bureau tends to control the prices of commodities. Common among its practices is fixing up of price-ceilings and price-floors. Monopoly in a particular market tends to keep prices higher. In this context, price ceiling – the maximum price that can be fixed on a particular commodity — is initiated by the State machinery in order to protect consumers from undue exploitation and to make available certain vital commodities at levels afforded to by common people. Essential drugs, for example, are normally brought under price ceiling. The government intervenes to subsidise what is considered essential to its people. Similarly, stiff competition in a particular market tends to bring prices down. It can reach levels that are no more profitable to the producers. In order to safeguard the interests of the producers, the government may initiate price floors — the legal minimum on the price that may be charged for a commodity. This practice finds its expression, for example, in governments offering support price on sugarcane and other crop production. In all these, the government tries to regulate the market in ways it thinks beneficial to its people. This regulatory function of the State is not confined to commodity market alone. It regulates, for example, labour market by fixing minimum wages and so on.

This practice, according to pro-market thinkers, is arbitrary, and,

in the long run, goes against the very same group that is sought to be protected. In the case of price-ceiling which is normally not in the interest of the producers, it tends to generate a host of problem like artificial shortages and black markets which end up in consumers having to bear the brunt of steep rise in price – an end contrary to the original objective. Likewise, price-floors, which are normally not in the interest of consumers may encourage consumers switch markets, *i.e.*, to opt for substitute products and thus leaving the suppliers of a certain market in the lurch. Suppose, if the price of coffee is kept at levels unaffordable to people they may as well switch over to tea or probably to cheap soft drinks.

Resource Allocation and the Efficiency of the Market

Left to its own mechanism, the market has a way of balancing the interests of both consumer and suppliers. As pointed out earlier, quantity demanded and quantity supplied move in opposite direction in their relation to price. While presenting this in a graph one would notice that the demand curve in relation to price has a negative slope whereas the supply curve has a positive slope. The point at which both the curves intersect is said to be the equilibrium of supply and demand, *i.e.*, it is at this point (price) the interests of both the consumer and the supplier meet. To illustrate this point, it can be presumed that there will be a greater demand for milk when a litre is sold at Rs.10 than when it is sold at Rs.15. Likewise more milk will be produced (supplied) when the price is at Rs.10 than when it is at Rs.5. At Rs.15 per litre, there will be more milk supplied than demanded, thus creating a surplus. In such a situation the price is constrained to fall. Similarly, at Rs.5 per litre, there will be more milk demanded than supplied, thus creating a shortage. In this situation the price is bound to rise. Like a pendulum, this swing of the price up and down will eventually come to a state of equilibrium, say for example at Rs.10, at which point there is neither surplus nor shortage, satisfying both consumers and producers. Thus in a free market, price and quantity needed are not determined by external forces but rather by the imperatives of supply and demand.

Market Mechanism and Human Freedom

One of the supposedly basic characteristics of market economy

is that it respects and fosters freedom. This is contrasted, once again, with planned economy where there is direct intervention by the state. Persons and forces involved in the process of economic activity are regulated. They are not free to do what they want. This in effect tampers with the basic human rights of the persons involved. Capitalist economy, on the other hand, with its market forces is conducive to freedom and democracy. It is as if freedom or liberty flows from the way market system is structured. As Michael Novak states:

It is the *structure* of business activities, not the intentions of businessmen, that are favorable to rule by law, to liberty, to habits of regularity and moderation, to a healthy realism, and to demonstrated social progress – demonstrably more favorable than the structures of churchly, aristocratic, or military activities.¹⁹

On this assessment of market as freedom-loving is based the analysis of the basic structure of market economy as constitutive of innumerable mutual voluntary exchanges. Let us suppose that “A” and “B” have something more than they actually need. “A” is in need of what “B” has in surplus, “B” is in need of what “A” has in surplus. It is mutually beneficial, in this situation, to swap what they have as extra. Yet they are not forced to enter into an exchange relationship either. And when they do enter into a relationship they do it out of their free will and it is well within their right to do so without ever having to step into someone else world. Murray Rothbard’s celebrated example of buying a newspaper for a dime:

“I transfer my ownership of the dime to the news dealer and he transfers ownership of the paper to me. We do this because, under the division of labor, I calculate that the paper is worth more to me than the dime, while the news dealer prefers the dime to keeping the paper.”²⁰

No coercion, in the normal sense, is possible within market system insofar as no individual is forced to enter into a market relationship. Market exchange is characterised by want-satisfaction. If two persons

19 Michael Novak, *“The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism,”* (New York: Simon & Schuster Publication, 1982), p. 91,

20 Murray Rothbard, 1973, pp. 41-42

enter into a relationship of mutual exchange, they enter into it, because it is mutually beneficial to them. Now if the market economy is a sum total of such individual exchanges, then the whole system is wholesome and good. For proponents of market economy, market economy spells freedom and justice: freedom, inasmuch as a market exchange can take place only in the context of mutual consent, and, justice, because no one's rights are violated.²¹

3. A Critical Evaluation of the Claims of Free Market Economy

The basic presupposition of market economy is that this is by far, the best mechanism ever invented in order to manage the *oikos*, giving it the *nomos* relevant to its organisation. In a free market economy where perfect competition exists, available resources would be allocated more efficiently. This system provides for all the space necessary for individual initiative and establishes freedom and autonomy. The role of the state is to restrain from active involvement in the economy but create conditions necessary for the free play of market forces.

Market economy – at least in its ideal type – has two decisive advantages over any economies of central planning. First of all, market economy is a set of institutions in which the primacy of economy is upheld. Economy is given a free hand without interference of political machinations. Narrow political and bureaucratic calculations are kept out of the way. Second, market system when combined with democratic institutions of political participation, has a capacity to respond to historical challenges in a more elastic way.²² This is where centrally-planned economies seem to have failed and those countries like China that still swear by planned economies are already in the process of accommodating elements of free market economy. However, to move today from an analysis of an ideal type market mechanism to global applicability of the system is indeed a great jump.

21 Cf. Haworth, 1994, p. 13. Also for the numerous stories around this theme cf. *ibid.*, pp.7-9.

22 Cf. Elmar Altvater, *The Future of the Market*, (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 19-21.

Invisible-Handism and the Great Betrayal of Adam Smith

The idea of self-interest within market mechanism goes back to Adam Smith (1723-1790). A teacher of logic and moral philosophy at Glasgow, Smith was concerned with the principles of "human nature" which he took as a universal and unchanging datum from which social behaviour and social institutions could be deduced. Both in his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) he was preoccupied with the question: what are the guiding mechanisms vis-à-vis the seemingly over-riding passions for self-preservation and self-interest both at the personal and societal levels. His answer in *Moral Sentiment* was an "inner man" who plays the role of the "impartial spectator," approving or condemning our own and others' actions with a voice impossible to disregard.²³ In *The Wealth of Nations*, however, he offers the principle of "competition" which is propelled by self-interest, as an "invisible hand" that leads to the general welfare of the whole society.

This analysis itself was situated in a milieu totally different from that of the present global market economy. Even the basic import of the term "market economy" today is not the same as that in the time of Smith was. It is so different that David Korten titled his address to the People's Summit 1997 — against the Economic Summit of the G-7 at Denver — as "Let's Try Something Radical. Like a Market Economy"! The assumption is, Smith meant something entirely different when he argued for market economy. His invisible hand thesis could work only in the context of *perfect competition*.

Perfect Competition and Managed Competition

Beginning with Adam Smith, market theory has been quite explicit that market efficiency is a consequence of small, locally owned enterprises competing in local markets on the basis of price and quality. The market mechanism — the law of supply and demand — will tend to equilibrium only in the context of perfect competition. A market is said to operate under *perfect competition* when the following four conditions are satisfied.

23 Cf. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol 27, 1985 (15th edition), pp. 308-311

1. *Numerous participants*: Each seller and purchaser constitutes so small a portion of the market that their decisions have no effect on the price. This requirement rules out trade associations or other collusive arrangements strong enough to affect price.
2. *Homogeneity of product*: The product offered by any seller is identical to that supplied by any other seller. (Example: wheat of a given grade is a homogeneous product; different brands of toothpaste are not.) Because the product is homogeneous, consumers do not care from which firm they buy.
3. *Freedom of entry and exit*: New firms desiring to enter the market face no special impediments that the existing firms can avoid. Similarly, if production and sale of the good proves unprofitable, there are no barriers preventing firms from leaving the market.
4. *Perfect information*: Each firm and each customer is well informed about the available products and their prices. They know whether one supplier is selling at price lower than another is.²⁴

By contrast, what we know as the global capitalist economy is dominated by a handful of *gigantic* corporations and financial speculators with billions of dollars at their disposal to reshape markets and manipulate prices. In a globalising market, the general image is one of the corporate *giants* of Japan, North America, and Europe battling it out in international markets. This image is increasingly a fable that obscures the extent to which a few core corporations are strengthening their collective monopoly market power through joint ventures and strategic alliances with their major rivals.²⁵ Pointing to statistical figures, Korten concludes, "the argument that globalization increases competition is simply false. To the contrary, it strengthens tendencies towards global-scale monopolization."²⁶

24 William J. Baumol and Alan S. Blinder, 1988, p. 558

25 D. C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (Goa: The Other India Press, 1998), 225. "For example, American computer giants IBM, Apple Computer, and Motorola have formed an interfirm alliance to develop the operating system and microprocessor for the next generation of computer." Quoted in Korten, 1998, 225.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 223.

This monopoly does not restrict itself to finance alone. One could identify at least five areas of global monopolisation.

1. Technological monopoly.
2. Financial control of world-wide financial markets.
3. Monopolistic access to the planet's natural resources.
4. Media and communication monopolies.
5. Monopolies over weapons of mass destruction²⁷

We have moved a long way from perfect competition envisaged by Adam Smith, the acclaimed Father of modern capitalism.

Centralised Economy through Back Doors

The avowed objective of laissez-faire capitalism was to do away with centralised economy. With the passing away of command economies in the erstwhile Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, one would have thought a new era of economic freedom and spontaneity would have been made possible. However, as the juggernaut of global economy advanced further the mega-corporations and financial houses continued to concentrate and consolidated their power over markets, technology, and capital through mergers, acquisitions, and strategic alliances.

If we consider the gross sales of a corporation to be roughly the equivalent of the GDP of a country, we find that of the world's 100 largest economies, 51 are economies internal to corporations. Only 49 are national economies.²⁸ As Korten points out, the economy internal to a corporation is not a market economy. It is centrally planned by corporate managers to maximise financial returns.

This concentration of economic power in relatively few corporations raises an interesting contradiction. Corporate libertarians regularly proclaim that central economic planning does not work and is contrary to the broader public interest. Yet successful

27 Cf. Samir Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization* (Delhi: Madhyam Books, 1997), pp. 3-5.

28 Cf. D. C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (Goa: The Other India Press, 1998), p. 220. Korten also points out that "General Motors' 1992 sales revenues (\$133 billion) roughly equaled the combined GNP of Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Zaire, Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya and Pakistan. Five hundred fifty million people inhabit these countries, a tenth of the world's population." *Ibid.*, 220-21.

corporations maintain more control over the economies defined by their product net works than the central planners in Moscow ever achieved over the Soviet Economy.²⁹ Ironically then, the global victory of capitalism is not a victory for the market so much as it is a victory for central planning!

Neo-classical Theory of Freedom: A Freedom to Starve?

The freedom thesis of the market economy can be evaluated both at the level of discourse and practice. Freedom is defined often, in the discourses of market economy, negatively. It is said to be "the absence of subjection to the will (sometimes the 'arbitrary' will) of another person or persons," or more precisely "the absence of coercion."³⁰

If freedom is understood in terms of absence of coercion without further qualification — without defining it within the context of its social function — it is not clear how market economy or capitalism is said to be free from employing coercion in one form or other. First of all, to state the obvious, a fully developed market economy presupposes a fully developed legal system that stands as the arbitrator and guarantor of ownership rights of the individual. No one is just free within the capitalist system to do what one thinks he/she could do.

Second, market economy exhibits inequalities of wealth among people. This is to be taken either as a symptom of the deep-rooted systemic disorder of the market economy itself or as an unavoidable by-product — a necessary evil — of something which is otherwise effective, noble, freedom-loving, etc. This immediately presents a dilemma. On the one hand, to accept the first possibility would go directly against the claim that market economy is the best allocative system possible and would go against, in effect, the "invisible hand thesis". On the other hand, if this is to be construed as an unavoidable outcome of the market system, then the system itself renders freedom an impossible prospect. For, inequality of wealth brings in inequality

29 D. C. Korten, 1998, p. 221.

30 For Hayek, "freedom refers solely to a relation of men to other men, and the only infringement on it is coercion by men." He defines it as "independence of the arbitrary will of another." Cf. Haworth, 1994:19

of power that eventually compromises the very value that is to be upheld, i.e., freedom. For example, an employer has powers over the worker restricting the opportunities and possibilities of the worker. The worker is "coerced" and is subject to the arbitrary will of the employer. Or in the case of someone (A) trying to buy a land or house, anyone who has more money (B) would exert power over 'A'. 'B' could effectively shut 'A' off from the land/house market by a simple fact of bidding higher than what 'A' could offer. This is certainly a form of coercion.

Third, one needs to assess the type of freedom that is being discussed among the pro-market thinkers. They do grant that coercion cannot be altogether avoided,³¹ though that needs to be delimited in terms of the agents and purpose of coercion. Hayek, while acknowledging the coercive power of the state in order to avoid coercion by individuals, cautions that this power of the state is to be limited to where it is required for safeguarding the private spheres of the individuals against coercion by other private persons.³² Hence the freedom of market economy is the freedom of the individual without any reference to society.

Market freedom at the level of practice tends to contradict its own self. This can be gauged at the degree at which the economic sovereignty of nation states is compromised. A system rooted in a philosophy that argues for the autonomy of the subject, now, denies this possibility to other subjects. A combination of economic globalisation, deregulation, and financial concentration has moved the new capitalist economy ever further away from the characteristics that may make a market economy socially efficient.³³

The present day global economy moves ahead forging new alliances within the corporate world and leaving the people on the wayside. There are four trends that are discernible in this onward thrust of the corporate world: 1) downsizing, 2) computerisation and automation, 3) mergers, acquisitions, and strategic alliances, and, 4) consolidation of workforce at the centre. In all these processes we find millions of workers going out of job and labour unions losing out their economic power. We have strange situation where the

31 Hayek, 1960:21, in Haworth, 1994:21.

32 *ibid.*

33 D.C. Korten

economic empire continues to expand without a corresponding expanse of the number of citizens within it. Though the combined sales of the world's top 200 corporations are equal to 28 percent of total world GDP, they employ only 18.8 million people, less than 1/3 of one percent of the world's population. The downsizing continues. What is the social import of the freedom guaranteed by neo-classical liberalism of the global economy? Is it a freedom to starve?

Of Trees and Wood: The Basic Fallacy

The basic fallacy of all these analyses is the failure to distinguish between the related concepts of market exchange and market economy. The basic presupposition here is that a pure free market (or 'capitalist') economy is simply, or nothing more than the sum or aggregate of all the market exchanges which actually take place between individuals within a given set.³⁴ Rothbard confirms it when he says, "The developed market economy, as complex as the system appears to be on the surface, is *nothing more than* a vast network of voluntary and mutually-agreed upon two-person exchanges."³⁵ If there can be nothing that is objectionable about the basic market exchange, then, there cannot possibly be any objection to the market economy too.

This kind of formulation has a scientific aura around it. It is like saying the universe is nothing more than the molecules or atoms that constitute the universe. Or like saying that the mind-boggling biological diversity of genus and species is nothing more than the expression of genetic material randomly selected at the microbiological level.³⁶ It is true there would be no market economy without bilateral exchanges just as there would be no universe without the atomic or sub atomic particles. It is also true that the concept of bilateral exchange has great explanatory power within an economic theory just as the random mutation of DNA at the evolutionary theory offers a rather comprehensive and unifying principle to the great multiplicity of forms.

What is at work here is a process of reducibility. This is an attempt to evaluate the whole by analysing its parts. In other words, it is

³⁴ Haworth, 1994, 7

³⁵ Murray Rothbard, 1973, 40

³⁶ Cf. Haworth, *loc.cit.*

trying to equate the whole with the sum total of its parts. This reducibility might be plausible within an explanatory framework. Serious questions arise when the same "reducibility" is applied in market economy within the context of an ethico-economic discourse.

Let us study the two phases of exchanges as described by Alan Haworth.

Stage one: Humans are created, fully-grown and hungry, and more or less evenly spaced across the surface of the Earth. They need food and shelter, but plenty and abundance reign and there is consequently no need for anyone who is at least averagely industrious to starve or go short. Never theless, it is also the case that people must work on raw nature if they are to survive, transforming it to meet their needs. This they proceed to do. As they work, they establish possession over those parts of the world upon which they have laboured, and, pretty soon, some individuals have managed to create more of certain things than they personally need. However, those same individuals also lack other things and, as a result, 'two-person, mutually beneficial, market exchanges' begin to take place.

Stage two: The process initiated at stage one has finally culminated in the development of a fully-fledged capitalist economy. Some individuals have proved more industrious and enterprising than others, some have been luckier and, as a result of such factors, inequalities of wealth have grown up. These are compounded over generations by inheritance. Eventually, the stock of 'raw nature' available for acquisition has dried up and a proletariat has emerged with nothing to sell but its own labour.³⁷

The power ramifications involved in exchanges of both these stages are not the same. The link between the primitive commodity exchange in an age of abundance and the modern capitalist economy is very weak. There are other factors that emerge in stage two that was not explicit in stage one. The 'whole' is more than the sum total of its 'parts'.

37. Haworth, pp. 14-15.

Rightful Ownership and Invisible Third Party

In a voluntary exchange of goods, it is presumed that the two partners who enter into the exchange relationship *own* what they have and what they exchange. Supposing that these partners do not *own* but somehow come to exercise *control* over them, then the paradigm changes. It is not necessary that one needs to own a thing. It is enough that one comes to exercise control over a thing in order to exchange it for something else. Supposing, again, that one expropriates something from someone else and refuses to part with it unless the one who lost control over it gives something else in return, still this would be a market exchange! Here the question of rightfully owning it, does not arise.

Further more, following reducibility thesis, one tends to explain away the basic inequality within capitalist system. The inequality is seen only as a corollary of the process. If there is nothing morally objectionable about the process itself, then, there should be nothing objectionable about the outcome.

To begin with, the bilateral exchanges seem to forget at least one important factor, that is, the possibility of a third party. Every time an exchange takes place between A^1 and A^2 , there is at least one A^3 for whom this exchange is foreclosed and to that extent A^3 is 'worse off'. Of course this 'disadvantage' of A^3 is insignificant at stage one because stage one was characterised by a comparative abundance of resources, and a numerically lesser population who were widely spread. But this is not so in stage two. As Haworth points out, "at stage two, circumstances have changed and we are confronted with a fully developed capitalist economy in which bilateral exchanges between consenting individuals normally *do* have far-reaching, and often deleterious, consequences for third parties not directly involved. At stage two, the foreclosure of opportunities to those third parties renders them worse off in a morally significant, not just a logically nit-picking sense."³⁸

A clear illustration of what we have been discussing here would be the problem of pollution. Suppose, a firm undertakes to supply leather to a manufacturing unit that produces bags. They enter into a relationship of market exchange that would be, presumably,

beneficial to both the contracting parties. The “morality” of this transaction cannot be assessed by looking at whether both the parties are truthful to their part of the agreement. There is an often-invisible third party whose concerns have to enter into the discussion. This third party are those people who use the stream or river that party 1 and party 2 continue to pollute by their tanning and leather works. It is common knowledge that the modern global economy has brought about an unprecedented ecological crisis. Hence, the basic question is: how can an economy, which indulges in wasting scarce natural resources, be called efficient? No economy that is unmindful of the allocation of resources for the future can be viable, and no economy that denies the “invisible” third parties to the market exchanges their right to a humane environment can be just.

To conclude, the reducibility thesis of the market economy, which tries to apply the principles that govern the individual market exchanges to market economy as a whole, is unwarranted, misleading and wrought with mischief.

4. Conclusion: Globalisation as an Anti-thesis of the Ethical Horizon of the “Other”

An ethical discourse on global capitalist economy that lays stress on the autonomy of the system is faced with a situation of having to come to terms with its own inner contradictions. This contradiction can be resolved only when people as communities become subjects of their economy. This is also a willingness to accept as a matter of principle, the validity of a new horizon: the horizon of the “other”. On the practical side of the discourse, we see a process whereby global economy has shifted the planning function from governments — which in theory are accountable to all their citizens — to corporations — which even in theory are accountable only to their shareholders. In other words, global capitalism has simply shifted economic and political power away from people and democratically elected governments to an unstable and predatory system of global finance.

Globalisation as the Absolutisation of “Self” and Negation of the “Other”

Idolising a Value

The discourse underlying the process of globalisation tends to put everything under its footstool. The process begins already with

the "deification" of commodity. The moment commodity trespasses its basic use-value to assume exchange-value it also assumes new social relationships. When commodity served the basic needs of the producer it was the producer who was the point of reference. The moment commodity became the reference point against which other realities were valued, commodity assumed a quasi existence by itself; it became "personified". From this moment the human being (the producer) had to become subordinated to the commodity.³⁹

The process gets further consolidated the moment 'money' enters the scene. Now money as the supreme symbol of commodity relativises everything (including human life) in relation to itself. "Pursuing money becomes a work of devotion... Piety dictates that human beings take on themselves the values appropriate to the activity involved in pursuing money."⁴⁰

The next stage is when money develops into capital. In this new phase of capital, commodity relationship in their operation assumes power not only over decisions of the proportions of what is to be produced but also over the life and death of the producer. In the words of Dussel, "capital's self-absolutization, its claim to utter singularity, isolation, existence *ex se*, its denial that it is beholden to anyone or anything, constitutes its character as a false god and an idol⁴¹".

Epiphany of the "Other"

The ideological orientations that justify globalisation of capitalist economy on the basis of its merits of simplicity, love for freedom and autonomy do not stand close scrutiny. They are at best hollow promises. At worst they are mechanisms that distort and mask the reality: reality of the negation of the "other".

This happens at two levels. On the first level unhindered capital accumulation and the global expansion of capitalist system has

39 Pablo Richard and Raul Vidales, "Introduction", in Franz J. Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986), p. xvi.

40 Hinkelammert (1986), p. xviii.

41 Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 133.

resulted in the actual death of millions of people all over the world. On the second level it tries to bring every economy, culture and every way of being under one banner thus denying the particularity of everything other than itself.

As has been pointed out earlier, globalisation is a constructed reality and it tends to create everything in its own image; create a world of "sameness". Thus it denies the possibility of an ethical horizon. For, an ethical horizon is possible only in the context of the "other" and not in the context of "sameness".

The "other" is constituted by difference and it is outside "sameness". The other is not part of the "system". It is outside it. Encounter with this "other" is possible not by co-optation but by respecting its identity as the "other". Globalisation by its 'capitalism sans frontiers' tries to co-opt everything on its way, deny, and destroy the "otherness" in the other.

This process is operative in communication, relationship, praxis, and anything that can be predicated as human. Meaning, comprehension, action, all takes place only at the "epiphany" of the other. This "other" stands outside one's system as an "exteriority" and challenges and "provokes" (*pro-vocare*: calling from ahead, beyond) the system.⁴²

The "otherness" of the other consists in its right to self-determination, self-expression, to have its say in the shaping up of its future. Globalisation takes away this right to self-determination and self-expression from nations and communities.

Historically, the "other" finds its embodiment in the poor, the marginalised, those outside the system (outcasts), cultures, systems and societies of the "natives". It is these cultures, societies and systems which are beyond the System inasmuch as they are not part of the System nor do they benefit from the System. Yet they have within themselves, in their act of "epiphany", the potential to delimit, challenge and tear apart the false-claims of the System. This challenge represents an irruption from beyond the "world". In the words of Dussel, "the voice, the call, the word of the other bursts in upon the world and turns it upside down, crying: "I am hungry".⁴³

The attribute of "otherness" applies not only to the marginalised

42 Cf. Dussel, *loc.cit.*, pp. 238-239.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 222

people of the periphery but also to the whole eco-system. The capitalist system has placed the paradigm of growth as the test of its vitality and strength. This paradigm, on the one hand, distorts the social reality of perennial poverty of the marginalised people, on the other; this also made possible only at an enormous cost of the eco-system. The present day system places the human being as the centre of all. The future of human beings that very much rests on the survival of the eco-system is least taken care of. That is why globalising forces unleash technologies that pollute the air and water, deplete the oceans, and burn fossil fuels at an unsustainable rate of speed.

Globalisation as both an economic and an ethical system is untenable. It can survive only at the death and destruction of marginalised people on the one hand and at the disappearance of the "other" from the ethical landscape.

Yet this is not to argue for isolation. Interaction is always possible among various cultures and communities without giving up their basic identities. Trade and Commerce are possible at international level engaged by nation states. Today, on the contrary, nation states have lost their place in the global economic field to some ultra-powerful bakers, butchers, cosmeticians and shop keepers who operate beyond all the boundaries of nation states, respecting no one's rules and regulations and are accountable to nobody.

Globalisation of People's Action at Community and National Levels

The merits of globalisation that consists in global communication and inter-relatedness can be safeguarded only when communities and nations are made responsible for their own integral and authentic development. Though in the present ideological climate this may sound well near impossible, all is not bleak. The recent WTO meeting at Seattle, for example, ended in a fiasco thanks to the concerted efforts of some governments of developing countries along with non-governmental organisation. The might of U.S. could not thrust its agenda down the throats of others. Change is also taking place in unexpected quarters. There are surprising changes taking place in the thinking of World Bank – the godfather of global capitalism. The latest issue of World Bank's World Development Report titled "Entering the 21st Century", says: "Governments play a vital role in development, but there is no simple set of rules that tells them what to do... The principal goal of development policy is to create

sustainable improvements in the quality of life for all people.”⁴⁴

A far cry from the days when WB championed the idea that growth measured in GDP as the objective of development. The WB itself has been forced to acknowledge that there is no necessary ratio between the growth in GDP and improvement in the quality of life for all people. The Report admits that growth does not easily percolate down and that growth processes are often to the advantage of those who are already better placed.

The Report puts forward a new strategy of Comprehensive Development Framework whose main components are:

1. The country, not assistance agencies, should own its development strategy, determining the goals, timing and sequencing of its development programmes;
2. Governments need to build partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, assistance agencies and organisations of civil society to define development needs and to implement programmes;
3. A long-term, collective vision of needs and solutions which will draw sustained national support should be articulated; and
4. Structural and social concerns should be treated equally and contemporaneously with macroeconomic and financial concerns.⁴⁵

Not that the change in World Bank thinking is going to usher in immediate change. It is a mute question whether the Bank itself, given its own inner constraints and contradictions, will be able to stand by its own thinking. Yet it has opened up the possibility of redefining international relations respecting the sovereignty of peoples and nations. This also gives credence to the aspirations of the people as communities and nations to get rid of the domineering forces that make them cogs in the wheel of global market and chart a course of development that is in tune with their own ethos and cultures. The awareness is growing that only within the process of localisation can there be authentic global integration and interdependence. It is in the awakening of the people as communities and nations combined with the global possibilities of exchange and communication – a process of “glocalisation” – lies the future of the great global family !

Thirumalai Ashram
Chunkankadai - 629 807
Tamil Nadu

44 World Development Report, *Entering 21st Century*, 1999, p. 13

45 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Culture and the Economy

M. Amaladoss

The author studies the culture that characterizes the present economic system and points out the oppression of nature and women it causes. Speaking of the need to create a counter-culture, he distinguishes between economic development and human development. With reference to Amartya Sen, Amaladoss analyzes the cultural hindrances for the authentic development of the victims of present day economy. He also draws our attention to the cultural conflicts provoked by the prevalent economic system.

What has culture to do with the economy? There have been some discussions concerning the influence of religion on the economy ever since Max Weber suggested that the 'spirit of Protestantism' may have contributed to the growth of capitalism. Protestantism was said to have promoted abstinence from worldly pleasures, which led to savings that became capital for reinvestment. Besides, Protestantism also inspired hard work and saw worldly success as a sign of God's special favour. People in the Weberian tradition used to suggest that the Asian religions with their theory of *karma* tended to promote a spirit of fatalism and resignation that is detrimental to vigorous economic activity in pursuit of profit and success. An exception however was made for Confucianism which seemed to have had a positive influence on East Asian economic development. The four (economic) tigers - Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan - were cited as examples.

The Economy and Non-economic Factors

I am not going to discuss the validity of these suggestions. They have been widely disputed. I am only mentioning them here to show that people have thought that the economy could be influenced by non-economic factors. Besides, culture and religion are closely related. Culture is a symbolic whole of world views, value systems, and attitudes and rituals that express, legitimate and celebrate all these. It includes also religion. Religion is an element of culture. I think that religion is the deepest element of culture, since it deals with ultimate goals and perspectives.

Exploring the relationship between culture and the economy I would like to argue that, though economic laws may have a certain autonomy, it is people who run and control the economy. People do this guided by particular world views and value systems, namely cultures. Therefore, culture also determines the kind of economy that we have and the impact it has on people. Economic development and deterioration have a human face that is delineated by culture.

Global Capitalism

Let us start with a very brief description of the present economic situation in the world, which is sufficient for our purposes of reflection on the relationship between economy and culture. Today, the dominant forces in the world economy are liberal capitalism and globalization. Capitalism is the accumulation, ownership and control of capital goods which are invested in production and/or commerce in view of making a profit. It is called liberal when it is freely controlled by individuals (persons or companies) who are in competition with each other, and this competition is regulated only by the economic forces of a free market. Globalization is the phenomenon in which the agents and forces of capitalism have a global playing field, not deterred by national boundaries and controls. The movement of goods in the market is global. The process of production is global, when parts made in different countries are assembled in still another country. Today the movement of capital and of the financial services are also global. The whole system is geared to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few multi-national corporations and the people who are their shareholders. Though the theory is that the riches that are produced will eventually trickle down to the poor, our experience has been that the rich are growing richer, both nationally and internationally, and the poor are growing poorer.

The Culture of Capitalism

People would claim that this economic system is an autonomous one that is governed by its own laws. But a little reflection will show that there is a whole cultural outlook that is at the back of the economic system. The only motive-force that drives the capitalist system is the pursuit of profit. Any ethical considerations are subject to economic interests. The whole world and people are looked at simply as a field in which one is engaged in making a profit. This is a sort

of economic materialism. The other does not exist except as a potential customer/consumer. One has no time to worry about the rights and interests of others. People speak about their own rights rather than their duties to the others and to the world. Individualism and competition are the rules that govern the behaviour of the people in the market place. Enlightened self-interest is the driving force of action. There is no sense of community or social responsibility. The market is supposed to be free. But actually it is manipulated and managed by the rich and the powerful, whether these are individuals or corporations or states for their own benefit and profit. The political power is seen as supportive of economic interests. Religion and ethics are privatized. A 'secularized' society will be the ideal field for capitalism to flourish. Competition cannot really be free and fair between unequal forces. On the contrary, there is no real competition at all.

Markets cannot flourish and profits cannot be made unless people are made to consume. So a culture of consumerism is created. Companies do not produce to meet the needs of the people. On the contrary new needs are created through propaganda and advertisement, using the mass media, so that people would buy the goods that are marketed. The dominant image of the human is one who consumes. People seem to define their identity in terms of how much and what brands of goods they consume. Having things is seen as more important than being. Soap operas and other similar programmes in the media carry and reinforce the message of consumerism very effectively.

We can see that underlying the free-market economy there is a particular way of looking at the human in society, at the goals of life, at the content and use of the media, at religion and ethics, at the role of politics, at the place of economy itself in the life of the humans, at the values that govern individual and social behaviour. These views, attitudes and values constitute a culture. This culture finds expression in literature, in the written, electronic and visual media. Young people absorb this and make it their own.

The Oppression of Nature and of Women

Underlying this culture is a set of attitudes to nature and to the feminine that are a product of science and technology. The earth is seen as something to be exploited for one's own benefit. There is

no sense of the earth as God's gift to all peoples. Each person feels free to appropriate and exploit and even destroy it for his/her personal pleasure and profit, without worrying about the rights of others and about the rights and needs of future generations. The humans become slaves of the machine. Life becomes mechanized. Many observers of the social scene have suggested that people's attitude to nature goes hand in hand with their attitude to women. Patriarchy is only another form of 'machismo' or male domination. The women are subjugated and exploited. They are used as sex objects. Their body is used in advertisements to sell goods of all kinds.

Science searches to understand the world's phenomena in terms of its causes through observation and experiment. But it easily degenerates into materialistic scientism that denies transcendence. Technology seeks to use the discoveries of science for controlling phenomena, or for producing machines and goods using the laws of nature. But it can give people an illusion of power and autonomy.

Search for a Counter-Culture

The consequence of this capitalistic culture and way of life is the dissatisfaction and unhappiness of every one. The majority poor of the world do not have the basic minimum for a dignified human life. They are not only poor, but oppressed and humiliated, even dehumanized. The few rich are not humanly much better off. They may have all the material comforts. But these do not give them real happiness. They are prey to various kinds of fears and tensions. They pamper their bodies at the expense of their humanity. They too are dehumanized by wealth and power.

Every one is therefore searching for a counter-culture. We need a new humanism in which the human is the master of the machine. Happiness will then be measured by the quality of life than by the quantity of things possessed. People will find their identity in self-gift rather than selfishness. The humans will find a new depth of meaning to life, not as isolated individuals, but as members of a community. Love will replace competition as the law of life. People will give priority for the basic needs of life rather than to luxuries. The earth will be discovered as God's gift to all peoples to be used with a sense of social responsibility. It will be honoured and nurtured as the field from which the humans draw their sustenance. People will learn to live in harmony with nature. Projects of sustainable

development and use of appropriate technologies will improve the quality of life rather than the quantity of products. Women will be considered as equals and honoured as co-creators who give birth to and nourish humanity with more than human milk. The basic principle that the economy is for the human and not the human for the economy will be affirmed. This will be shown in the human and social control, through political and democratic processes, of the economy, breaking down the myth of the free market. The poor will be cared for, the State creating a social security net that protects their rights and interests as humans and meets their basic needs. Economy will have a human face. We can see that this is a cultural rather than an economic project.

Economic or Human Development

Amartya Sen has repeatedly emphasized in his books that true development is human, which includes economic development.¹ But, though human development is a goal in itself, it can also help economic development. We see here the dialectic interplay between human and economic development. It goes without saying that cultural development is part of human development. Education and literacy, basic health care and nutrition, democratic participation in development, the education and liberation of women, social equality are some elements of human development. While economic development is necessary to meet many of these basic needs, economic development by itself will not bring about such human development. Economic development tends to make the rich richer. So only the State can assure that some of the fruits of development are used to promote human development. On the other hand, where people are developed in the areas indicated above, they effectively contribute to further their own and the country's economic development.

Sen is in favour of a capitalistic model of economic development. But at the same time he also thinks that the State must intervene to make sure that basic human development too takes place. We can then think of development as holistic. He illustrates, with some comparative examples, the interplay of human and economic development. Every one recognizes that China has opened up its economy and is making rapid economic progress. In recent years,

1 For what follows cf Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India. Economic Development and Social Opportunity*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995.

India too is trying to open up its economy. But before opening up its economy more than ten years ago, China had achieved a greater measure of human development in terms literacy, health care, social equality, etc. for its people than India has managed to achieve even now. If India does not give importance to basic human development, then India will go the way of Brazil rather than China. Its GNP (Gross National Product) may grow. But the wealth so produced will accumulate in a few rich hands, while the state of the poor will get worse. If people continue to remain underdeveloped, then economic development will also slow down, because people's agency is hindered and suppressed. A basic economic equality is not achieved merely by redistribution of produced wealth, but by promoting participation in producing wealth, so that people have a share and a say in their own development. But if people are not developed then they will not be able to play an active role in economic development; nor will they benefit from it. Sen compares Kerala with China. The State of Kerala is very advanced in human development, when compared not only to other States in India, but also to the various regions in China, But its economic development is poor, because the economy has not really been freed and opened up.

Through these comparisons, Sen shows the interrelationship of human and economic development. I think that we can very easily characterize human development as cultural development. People are freed and enabled to become agents of their own development. But at the same time, people cannot develop economically, if the economy itself is not opened up. We are interested here only by Sens point that human and cultural development is essential not only for economic development, but also for its just, if not fully equal, distribution.

Cultural Hindrances

In the course of his argument, Sen points to some factors of a cultural nature that are hindrances to economic development. Education and literacy are important and essential both to human and to economic development. Sen points out that in India literacy is linked to the caste status of the people. Those who belong to the oppressed castes are less literate. The Indian government has not been investing enough funds in primary education, while it is spending a lot on higher education. Sen suggests that behind the disinterest in promoting primary education may lie the cultural factor that the people who belong to the dominant castes and who control government's policy-making and programmes are not really

interested in the poor and oppressed castes getting educated. A caste prejudice may underlie such attitudes. Besides, the desire of the rich and middle class and castes to provide better opportunities and jobs for their own children leads them to invest available funds disproportionately in higher education. Secondly, the hierarchical spirit of the caste system may not encourage real democracy that is necessary for participative development. Thirdly, women's agency is an important requirement for development. The women can influence men and children. The feminine spirit is also necessary to counter the male-dominant pretensions of technology. But women in India are more illiterate, less educated, more undernourished, less respected and listened to than men. These attitudes to women excludes half of humanity from participative development.

Economy and Cultural Conflict

The economic system of liberal capitalism is not culturally neutral as its votaries claim it to be. The economic and political powers that control the global economy seek to impose, of course in pleasant and hidden ways through the media, a global consumer culture. This is backed up at other levels by the cultural forces of modernity and post-modernity. These forces are materialistic and secularizing, fragmenting and relativizing, de-humanizing and destructive of community. They seek to destroy other cultures. Post-modernity has led the West to cultural bankruptcy. People there are seeking alternatives in various sorts of ersatz religious movements. Some are seeking their roots in religious fundamentalism. Others are rediscovering and asserting their cultural identities, so that people have started talking seriously about multi-culturalism. Non-Western, particularly Asian cultures, are reacting more aggressively and creatively. They see the 'global' culture as basically 'Western' mediating a form of cultural colonialism supporting and facilitating economic and political neo-colonialism. Some movements of Islamic fundamentalism in West Asia, for instance, are actually violent rejections of the secularizing influence and the politico-military domination of the modernizing West. Since culture and economy are supported by politics, they inevitably also take political and military(using arms) forms.

In East and South Asia there seems to be a variety of counter-cultural movements. The culture of consumerism, after all, concerns itself only with the material aspects of life and with the relationship of the humans to the natural world. Though it also seeks to influence other levels of culture like the relationships among humans and between the humans and the Transcendent, the developed cultures of Asia are holding their own at these levels. They try to integrate consumer culture on their own terms. After a period of tensions and conflicts a new equilibrium may emerge. Some of these cultural self-defensive movements may take fundamentalist forms, when they are mixed up with religious and political factors. This seems to be the root of movements like the RSS. They feel at home with modernity and consumerism. But they reject cultural colonialism. In the process they not only oppose Islam and Christianity which they consider as culturally 'foreign'; they also seek to strengthen a version of traditional hierarchic culture that has been practicing a form of internal colonialism in the way it oppresses the Dalits and the Tribals and their cultures.

Therefore the subaltern cultures of the poor and the tribals feel oppressed both by the global consumer culture and its local votaries among the economic and political elite. Their poverty itself keeps them from falling totally into the tentacles of the consumer culture. They seek to affirm their identity and agency by rediscovering their cultural roots.

Conclusion

Liberation movements normally tend to limit themselves to the economic and political dimensions of life. They will be greatly helped if they extend their attention and interest further to the cultural and religious dimensions. It is these that help people to affirm their identity and build up their agency, so that they can become developers and creators of their own future. Economic development without human and cultural control can only lead to the destruction of humans. Culture without economics will not promote holistic development. When economics and cultures work together they can lead to true human development.

Vidyajyoti
Delhi

Bandits and Messiahs: Social Revolts in the Time of Jesus

P. A. Sampathkumar

Banditry seems to have been a common phenomenon in agrarian societies. Situation of oppression and foreign rule were some of the reasons which turned people into bandits. The bandits as well as Messiahs had the goal of bringing justice to the victims and to liberate the land from foreign domination. They were inspired by the ideal of an egalitarian society. In the present article, the author attempts to recapture the situation that characterized Palestine in the time of Jesus - a situation in which there appeared bandits as well as many self-proclaimed messiahs. The scholarly study and reflection of the author offers a key to understand the plight of the victims today and their struggle for a different order of society.

The mid-first century Palestine saw two important events which have changed the course of its history: The ministry and death of Jesus of Nazareth and the great Jewish revolt in 66-70 AD. Jesus' actions and words became the focal point for the development of Christianity. The great Jewish revolt against the Roman occupation, which took more than four years to suppress, laid the foundation not only of a reconstructed Jewish society, but also of what became Rabbinical Judaism. The destruction of Palestine, its city Jerusalem and the temple, in fact, became a turning point both for the Jews and the Christians. However the great Jewish revolt was not the first one to appear in the history of Palestine. There were a number of them even before and after the destruction of the temple.

This paper tries to recapture some of those revolts. Who were the agents of those revolts? What were the reasons for them? Was there any theological foundation for such revolts? What was the social condition that provoked the masses to join in such revolts? By trying to answer these questions we intend to rediscover the socio-religious significance of such revolts. With the recent American experience in Vietnam, the rise of liberation theology and base

communities in Latin America, the politico-religious situation in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, we become aware that highly repressive regimes or socio-economic conditions can evoke organised resistance, particularly among the peasants. By focusing our attention on the Israelite and Jewish peasantry which figures prominently in biblical history, we intend to address the contemporary situations of revolt, resistance and unrest in our times.

1. Historical Background

The gospel narratives, which recount the activities of Jesus in Galilee and the life of the people in the region, is remarkably different from those of Roman and Greek classical literature. From the gospels one gets a picture of life far removed from the urbane and cosmopolitan world. Scholars point out that the Gospel narratives “present a world of two classes, the very rich and the poor. There is a Rich Man or Prince, with his stewards, and the peasantry who owe debts of a hundred measure of oil or wheat” (Lk 16:1-6)¹. A similar contrast can also be noticed in the parable of the king and the two debtors (Mt 18:23-25) and the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32). All these reflect a state of small peasant economy – a few hired servants and a single beast kept for a special feast.

Josephus also attests to this fact of peasant economy and society when he says, “We are not sea-going people, and take no pleasure in trade or in the dealings with others that result from it. Our cities are built far from the sea, and we cultivate intensively the fertile land we share” (*Against Apion*, 1:60). Elsewhere he further states that the Jewish peasants from “densely populated villages” cultivate “the fertile land”².

From Josephus’ writings we come to know also that there were lots of occasions for conflicts between the poor and the rich when the latter tended to use and abuse their power particularly in controlling the “surplus produce” of the peasants. In fact, the Lukan Sermon on the Plain illustrates in clear terms this economic condition when Jesus offers hope for the poor: “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God... But woe to you rich, for you have received your consolation” (Lk 6:20,24).

1 A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Law and Roman Society in the New Testament*, Oxford, 1963, p.139.

2 *Jewish War* 3:43.

It is not surprising that there were hostilities and resentments built up between the wealthy and the peasants. It is in the light of such a social structure and its potential for conflicts, one can understand the fear of the chief priests and the scribes and the elders when they reacted to Jesus in the Temple (Mk 11:27-33).

In fact, the Jewish aristocracy had good reasons to be "afraid of the people" (Mk 11:33), for the common peasants were not always docile and passively resigned to their situation in life. They had ideals of what life should be like and they knew what the early tribal confederation society before the monarchy was, and kept that memory alive in their own popular way. While the professional groups of scribes and priests systematised and codified such memories into written forms, the tales, legends, mores, however, continued to exist in the memory of the ordinary peasants. In the anthropological terminology this can be classified as "great traditions" (written) and "little traditions" (oral). Although these two traditions were interdependent, given the cultural set up of the early Jewish society, the peasants' cultural memory continued to dominate their thinking and their life. It is in the context of such peasants' ideals we need to understand the popular support for bandits, robbers, messiahs and messianic movements which, in fact, confronted the official beliefs and theological considerations. We shall base our understanding of this by looking closely at Palestine under the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman rulers.

i) Re-establishment of the Hierarchical Social Order

The Persians, after the conquest of Babylon, reversed the Babylonian policies of large-scale deportations of natives and enforcement of the state religion. They allowed the exiles to return to their land and practice their own religion and customs and traditions. This in fact made the Jews to reconstruct the city walls and the Temple. This meant to re-establish the hierarchical social structure. Once again Jerusalem became the administrative, social and religious centre with sharp social-economic divisions. Nehemiah tried to effect a reform in favour of the peasantry, but it did not last long.

The lack of Davidic leadership also helped the priests and the wealthy to dominate the Palestinian society and economy. By the end of the Persian rule, the high priest was recognised as the political and economic representative as well as the religion. This situation

continued during the Hellenistic and Roman rule. Judea functioned as temple-community under the external political powers.

ii) Martyrdom or Resistance

With Alexander the Great Hellenistic rule was established in Palestine. The rulers brought in a programme of economic exploitation and general policy of cultural imperialism. This in fact threatened the traditional peasant life. The ruling priestly class and the wealthy in order to safeguard their privileged social positions compromised themselves with the Hellenistic civilisation. The net result was alienation between the privileged society and the Judean peasantry.

Further the establishment of a military colony in Jerusalem profaning the sacred precincts of the Temple, confiscation of the land and homes of the peasants by the occupying forces of Seleucids, imposition of new taxes and all sorts of abuses of power by the ruling class provoked a popular resistance. People fled from Jerusalem and perhaps this led to an organised resistance at the later stage under the leadership of the Maccabees³.

This situation also produced an intense crisis of faith. Accepting the Hellenistic reform would have meant abandoning their faith in God and commitment to the Torah. But resistance to the reform meant facing a martyr's death. Either course appeared to be damaging to Jewish faith. Desperate to understand their seemingly impossible situation; some faithful Jews sought divine revelation (Gk: *apokalypsis*) to explain why their life circumstances had become so intolerable and what plan God might have to deliver them. As a result, there was an upsurge of apocalypticism: revelatory literature⁴.

3 For details on this situation see J.Bright, *A History of Israel* (3rd edition), London, 1980, p.417-427; M.Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians*, Philadelphia, 1980, p.3-82; A.Paul, *Le monde des juifs à l'heure de Jésus: histoire politique*, Paris, 1981, p.159-228; P.A.Sampathkumar, "Society and Religious Tensions, a Case Study: The Maccabean Period", *Jeevadhara* 29 (1999) 48-53.

4 J.J.Collins defines the nature of apocalyptic literature in the following manner: "Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (*Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, *Semeia* 14 (1979) 9. The purpose of apocalypse is to interpret the present (earthly circumstances) in the light of supernatural world and of the future. By this the writer intends to influence both the understanding and the behaviour of the audience by means of divine authority. Scholars distinguish two broad types of apocalypses: the historical

Thus arose the apocalyptic literature such as the Assumption of Moses, 1 Enoch as well as the book of Daniel. They were written in connection with the reform crisis and resistance to Hellenistic persecution. They provided motivation for resistance. Further they also consoled the ordinary people by convincing them of God's deliverance which was close at hand;

The authors of those literature insisted on following the Torah as the requirement for God's ancient promises to Israel (Is 42:1-7; 49:1-6) to be fulfilled in their present life. However they were also aware that failure to keep the covenant could not be the only cause for their seemingly impossible situation. Many Jews have died as martyrs. It was therefore necessary to find where they went wrong. What solution can one find to come out of this situation!

In continuity with the prophets, particularly, exilic and post-exilic prophets, some "sages" (*maskilim*) who were not attached to the Temple establishment, began to interpret the events of the day by means of visions and dreams. Martyrdom for faith or armed resistance against the oppression could find a meaning and purpose in the fulfilment of God's plan for the final kingdom of God. They believed that one could enter the kingdom of God by martyrdom. In fact the belief in resurrection of the dead was a creative apocalyptic response to the situation. Similarly armed resistance or rebellion was considered as fighting on the side of God to establish God's kingdom (2 Mac 2:21) which they believed was imminent.

Once the armed resistance found a theological meaning⁵, it was easy for the Maccabees to organise their onslaught against the Seleucides. Thus many peasant guerrilla bands plundered the estates and took away the properties of the Hellenized aristocracy. They distributed the booty "to those who had been tortured and to the orphans and widows, and also to the aged, shares equal to their own" (2 Mac 8:30).

type (e.g. Daniel) and the otherworldly journeys (e.g. 1 Enoch 1-36); For details see P.D.Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalypse*, Philadelphia, 1975.

5 *The Apocalypse of Weeks*, *1 Enoch* and *the Book of Dreams* were produced during the Maccabean revolt. Both of them review lengthily the present situation and in the guise of prophecy speak of divine intervention and final judgement. They even endorsed the military action of Judas Maccabees and the use of sword against sinners (cf. 1 Enoch 91:11). In fact 1 Enoch speaks of militant "lambs" who look to their heavenly patron Michael for victory. The *Book of*

Finally, led by Judas Maccabees, the peasant army recaptured Jerusalem and established the rule of Torah. It was a victory with significant apocalyptic inspirations. However, the outcome was not what the peasantry exactly hoped for. Exploitation continued. The kingdom of God was not established. The long desire of the peasants – the tribal confraternity – did not come through. Instead the Hasmonean dynasty was established. In fact, “what had begun as a Judean peasant revolt, guerrilla warfare against Seleucid armies, ended not in the final establishment of the kingdom of God, but simply in the establishment of a new dynasty of high priests”⁶. Later history of the Hasmonean rulers shows how the original purpose was lost, how the hopes of the peasantry shattered, how their rule was very much disappointing. It was disheartening for them to see how the Hasmonean regions became much like any other petty, semi-hellenised kingdom, hardly qualifying itself as a manifestation of the kingdom of God.

We do not have any documentary sources to assess the reactions of the large number of the peasants to this worldly outcome. However it is possible to understand it from the emergence of the groups such as the Essenes and the Pharisees who were once part of the Hasidim which played an important role in the Maccabean revolt⁷.

iii. Submission or Revolt

The Roman domination of Palestine came after much struggle and plots carried out by a number of self-interested people. During their conquest, the Romans treated the peasants brutally. They burnt down their villages, destroyed the cities, slaughtered, crucified or enslaved their entire population⁸. For example, Varus, the legate of Syria, captured Sepphoris and “sold its inhabitants as slaves and set the city on fire”⁹. Further he crucified 2000 rebels¹⁰.

Daniel, on the contrary, advocated a passive and resigned to the will of God attitude.

6 R.A.Horsly with J.S.Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, Cambridge, 1985, p.22.

7 For a precise study on the Essenes and Pharisees see *ABD* vol. 2, p.619-626; vol. 5, p.289-303 with bibliography.

8 See *Antiquities* 14.120; *Jewish War* 1.180, 219-20.

9 *Antiquities* 17:288-89.

10 *Antiquities* 17.295.

In 40 BC amid the political chaos in Rome, Herod gained recognition as king over the Jewish territories in Palestine¹¹. After subduing the revolt of the peasants and the armies of Matthatias Antigonus and the Parthians with the help of the Romans “he became the epitome of Hellenistic imperial rule as a Roman client king”¹². He controlled the people through mercenaries and built series of fortresses and military colonies around the countryside. He had his own secret service of informers. Although he built the temple at Jerusalem, his fondness for Hellenistic culture did not find favour among the peasant Jews. He was a ruthless ruler and his many building projects¹³ forced him to tax heavily the people. He maintained stringent political and social control in such a way there was no opportunity even for protests and outcry¹⁴.

No wonder, we hear little of rebellion under his rule. However resentment against him continued. When Herod finally died in 4 BC the deep and long suppressed discontentment burst into spontaneous popular revolts throughout the country¹⁵.

The Romans divided Herod's kingdom among his sons. Herod Antipas (4 BC – 39 AD) was set up as tetrarch over Galilee and Perea. Jesus began his public ministry during his reign. The area that was under his control had a considerable Jewish peasant population loyal to Torah. Philip (4 BC – 34 AD)¹⁶ received the regions of Batanaea, Trachonitis, Auranities, Gaulanitis, Panias and Iturea. The majority of the inhabitants were Gentiles.

11 He achieved this through intrigue and manoeuvre from one faction to another during the Roman struggle.

12 R.A.Horsly with J.S.Hanson, *Bandits*, p.31.

13 From Josephus' accounts (*Jewish Wars* and *Antiquities*) we come to know that Herod initiated the construction of towns, fortifications, fortresses, palaces, temples, gymnasias, theatres, stadia, hippodromes, monuments, harbours, irrigation projects etc. The building activity virtually never stopped during the years of his reign (37-4 BC). He also financed number of constructions outside his territory, for example, at Antioch, Rhodes, Chios, Nikopolis, etc.

14 *Antiquities*, 15.365-69

15 cf. *Antiquities* 17. 206-323; *Jewish Wars* 2. 1-100. For a detailed report on this see E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. 1, p. 330-335.

16 Philip was an exception among the sons and grandsons of Herod. Whereas all the others, in imitation of their father and grandfather, were ambitious, domineering, harsh and tyrannical toward their subjects, his reign was mild, just and peaceful.

Archelaus (4 BC – 6 AD) was in-charge of Judea and Samaria. He received the title of ethnarch. However, after nine years, the Romans deposed him¹⁷. Thereafter until the great rebellion in 66 Judea and Samaria were directly ruled (except for three years by Herod Agrippa I, 41-44 AD) by the Romans. The peasant population detested the Roman rule. There were periodic revolts and troubles¹⁸. This period 6-66 AD is important for Christians because it is the context of the life and ministry of Jesus and for the Jews it is the context for the formation of the Rabbinic Judaism.

The discontentment against the Romans finally ended up in a great revolt¹⁹ in 66. It was basically a peasant revolt. The lower priests masterminded it. Although a certain number of lay and priestly aristocracy (for example, Eleazar, the Temple captain) participated in the revolt, it was basically a peasant upsurge. Josephus makes it clear that the ruling class was attempting to negotiate with the Romans, but they could not contain the feelings of the peasants²⁰. Josephus, himself a general in-charge of Galilee, later deserted to the Romans and assisted them to re-conquer Palestine²¹. It took three years for the Romans to re-conquer the land. In 70 AD Jerusalem fell to the Romans. And it took another three years to contain the various pockets of revolts including the Sicarri on Massada²².

The land was devastated. The holy city was destroyed. But the passion for freedom did not die among the Jewish peasants. The apocalyptic spirit continued to haunt them. They expected God's intervention on behalf of the people. They continued to pursue the

17 A deputation of the Jewish and Samaritan aristocracy complained about him to the emperor Augustus. The emperor summoned Archelaus to Rome. After the interrogation he dismissed him from office and banished him to Vienne in Gaul in AD 6 (see *Antiquities* 17.342-3).

18 For details see E. Schürer, *The History*, vol. I, p.357-398.

19 For details see E. Schürer, *The History*, vol. I, p.484-513. Schürer titles this section "The Great War with Rome".

20 See *Jewish War* 2.408-21.

21 See *Jewish War* 3.340-92, 408.

22 See *Jewish War* 7. 252-388. According to *Jewish War* 7.401 the mass suicide of the garrison of Massada took place on 15th Nisan (March/April), i.e. on the feast of Passover. The year is not mentioned. From the inscriptions and other sources, it could be 74 AD.

ideal of a just society, free from any kind of oppression and exploitation. Sixty-two years later in 132-135 once again they mustered strength for revolt. Historians call this revolt "Bar Kochba revolt"²³. Once again the Romans ruthlessly suppressed the rebellious peasantry.

To sum up, our rapid analysis of the historical background point out that the Jewish people's historical heritage from ancient Israel was of freedom from foreign domination and domestic oppression. Their experience under the Hellenistic and Roman rule was just the opposite: domination, exploitation and persecution. In spite of this difficult situation, however, a substantial portion of the Jewish peasantry, along with a good number of scribes and ordinary priests, remained faithful to Torah and resisted oppression. They kept alive their faith in God. Hope refused to die.

Now we shall explore in detail how these periodic revolt and resistance assumed importance in the social order particularly in the time of Jesus.

2. Ancient Jewish Social Banditry

Eric Hobsbawn in his analysis on the nature and characteristic of social banditry points out, "social banditry is universally found wherever societies are based on agriculture... and consist largely of peasants and landless labourers ruled, oppressed and exploited by someone else — lords, towns, governments..."²⁴. In traditional agrarian societies when peasants are exploited, social banditry seems to be a normal phenomenon. Brigands usually share the common man's sense of justice and their basic religious beliefs. They are often considered as champions of justice for the common people and naturally enjoy support of the peasants. The peasants even protect the bandits from being captured by the authorities. Banditry arises when there is sharp social-economic condition and it occurs regularly in areas where the governments are administratively ineffective²⁵. These conditions can also serve as reasons for the rise of various popular movements in a given society.

23 For details see E. Schürer, *History*, p.514-557.

24 E. J. Hobsbawn, *Bandits*, rev. ed., New York, 1981. p.19-20.

25 Cf. R.A.Horsley, *Bandits*, p.49.

The ancient Jewish society under the Hellenistic and Roman rule provided such conditions for the rise of social banditry and popular messianic movements. One is forced to ask why so many Jewish peasants were prepared to abandon their villages to follow a prophet or a messiah into wilderness or rise in rebellion against the authorities. Peasants normally do not take such drastic action. The social situation we have pointed out earlier, certainly paved the way for such drastic actions on the part of the peasants.

Another contributing factor to the rise of unrest was the compromising and exploitative behaviour of the Jewish ruling class. Tensions also arose between the temple priesthood and the other masses. The Hasmoneans, non-Zadokite by origin, usurped the high priest office. On his part also Herod appointed as high priests members of Diaspora Jews. Temple as well as priesthood being a religio-political symbol, its administration by questionable legitimacy, widened more and more the gap between priestly aristocracy and the peasants. As Josephus indicates, the priestly aristocracy's exploitative behaviours vis à vis the ordinary priests and the people created often tensions among them²⁶. As a result, the priestly aristocracy, in order to stay at the head of Jewish society, collaborated with the Roman imperial system. All these factors, in fact, aggravated the tension and contributed to the rise of banditry.

We shall list now a few prominent bandits who really enjoyed the popular support.

i. *Aristobulus*: In 57 BC, proconsul Gabinus granted the local nobility governing power in their respective districts. The peasants saw Aristobulus, an Hasmonean, as their saviour. They rallied around him. But Gabinus suppressed the rebellion²⁷.

ii. *Hezekiah*: Josephus speaks of him as a "brigand chief" (gr. *archilêistês*), who, "with a large gang, was overrunning the district on the Syrian frontier"²⁸. The Galileans who joined the brigand band could be victims of the political-economic strife. Hezekiah led his group even to Jerusalem. He was said to be a great man of strength²⁹.

26 *Antiquities*, 18.274.

27 *Antiquities*, 14.72; see also E. Schürer, *History*, vol. I, p.233-242.

28 *Jewish War*, 1,204; 304. *Antiquities*, 14.159.

29 *Antiquities*, 17.271.

When he and his men were killed by Herod, there was a popular protest not only in Galilee but also in Jerusalem. It was in the temple itself that the people appealed to Hyrcanus to bring Herod to trial in the Sanhedrin. Josephus writes, "for Herod, Antipater's son, has slain Hezekiah and those that were with him, and has thereby transgressed our law which hath *forbidden* to slay any man, even though he were a wicked man, unless he had been first condemned to suffer death by Sanhedrin, yet has he been so insolent to do this, and that without any authority from you"³⁰.

iii. *The Galilean Bandits*: There was also another group of Galilean bandits, probably the followers of Hezekiah, lived in caves in the precipitous cliffs near the village of Arbela in Galilee. They remained strong enough to harass the gentry and also posed a threat to Herod's complete control over Galilee³¹. Herod managed to wipe them out from their strongholds. Josephus vividly narrates the success of Herod in the following manner:

"With ropes he lowered (over the cliffs) the toughest of his men in large baskets until they reached the mouths of the caves; they then slaughtered the brigands and their families, and threw firebrands at those who resisted... Not one of them voluntarily surrendered and of those brought out forcibly many preferred death to captivity" (*Jewish War* 1.311)... "An old man who had caught inside one of the caves with his wife and seven children... stood at the entrance and cut down each of his sons as they came to the mouth of the cave, and then his wife. After throwing their dead bodies down the steep slope, he threw himself down too, thus submitting to death rather than slavery" (*Antiquities*, 14.429-30).

iv. *Eleazar ben Dinai*: Another brigand chief, operated openly in Judean and Samaritan countryside. He was active for twenty years³². Josephus narrates how the people appealed to him for justice. Once the Samaritans murdered a Galilean on his way to a festival in Jerusalem. Masses of Judeans appealed to the governor Cumanus who did nothing to punish the Samaritans. Then, they appealed to

30 *Antiquities*, 14.169.

31 Josephus says, "Brigands who lived in caves were over-running much of the countryside and inflicting injuries on the inhabitants as much as a war would have done" (*Jewish War* 1.304).

32 *Jewish War*, 2.253.

Eleazar ben Dinai and Alexander who led an expedition to Samaria and punished the Samaritans. Here is a clear case that in a situation when the authorities would not rectify the unjust state of affairs, the Jewish peasants looked to the brigands for justice. The Roman Procurator Felix could capture him only by trickery, by offering false assurances.

Josephus narrates an incident which in fact highlight the existence of cordial relationship between the bandits and the peasants. Once Eleazar's group of bandits robbed Caesar's servant Stephan near Beth-horon. The villagers far from pursuing and apprehending the brigands protected them instead. This infuriated the Procurator Cumanus, who ordered the inhabitants to be brought to Jerusalem in chains and took vengeance by plundering their village. It is one such instance where the peasants were willing to suffer for the consequences of protecting the brigands³³.

Banditry had been a common sight during the Roman rule of Palestine. The burden of taxes, alien rule, occasional provocation by the Roman rulers and their soldiers, in fact, encouraged the rise of banditry. Some leaders could operate with a greater number of followers for a considerable period of time without being caught by the authorities, while others had small groups and could operate only for a shorter period of time. Moreover, actions taken by the authorities to capture or punish the existing bands of brigands led to the outbreak of even further banditry. Josephus speaks of them often in his works: "many of them (Jewish peasantry) turned to banditry out of recklessness, and throughout the whole country there were raids, and among the more daring, revolt"³⁴. Josephus reports that, particularly, during the governorship of Pontius Pilate, Cumanus, Felix, Festes, Albinus Jewish banditry multiplied.

The peasants always looked upon the bandits as their supporters in time of crisis. They shared the lots of the peasants and were considered as defenders of their religious faiths as well as their rights. The social brigand was viewed as a hero of righteousness and a symbol of the people's hopes for a restoration of a more just order.

33 *Antiquities*, 20.113-17; *Jewish War*, 2.228-31

34 *Jewish War*, 2.238.

3. Popular Messianic Movements

Jesus of Nazareth was executed by the Romans on the charge of being "the king of the Jews" (Mk 15:26). However before and after Jesus, there were several popular Jewish leaders, who pretended to be the kings. People's memories of sacred traditions about the "charismatic leaders" (Judges) and kings of old incorporated in the law and the prophets, contributed as basis for these movements³⁵. Although there is a debate on the exact interpretation of messiah in the Jewish thought, it had been noted that in the OT the term *messiah* (anointed) has never been used to mean a future saviour³⁶. The later Jewish writings of the period between 200 BC and 100 AD do not also use this term except in connection with agents of divine deliverance expected in the future³⁷.

In fact, the expectations of an anointed royal figure began to revive somewhat during the Hasmonean period. When the Hasmoneans Jonathan and Simon established themselves as high priests, the Qumranites and the Pharisees considered it illegitimate. The situation worsened when the subsequent Hasmoneans proclaimed themselves kings. It may not be surprising, thereafter, to find the yearnings for the fulfilment of the promise to David among the Qumranites and the Pharisees. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Psalms of Solomon throw some light over this factor.

The Writings of the Essenes discovered in the caves at Qumran speak of the Community expecting the final fulfilment involving three principal eschatological agents: the Anointed Prophet, the Anointed

35 See for a detailed study on this issue in E. Schürer, *History*, vol. II, p.488ff.

36 However, expectation for the better future existed in the prophets. It was never entirely lost by the people, even though it was not always as vigorous as it became after the Maccabean uprising. Of course, at later periods, this hope underwent many changes.

37 Book of Daniel (167-165 BC), however, foretells a coming deliverance. God himself will sit in judgement over the kingdoms of this world and will take away from them power and dominion and will uproot and wipe them out for ever. But "the saints of the Most High" will receive the kingdom and possess it for ever (7:9-27). Whether Daniel visualised a messianic king at the head of his kingdom of the Most High is not clear. He makes no mention of such a person in any case. The one who appears in the form of a man (7:13) is no way the personal messiah but the people of saints of the Most High (7:18). As the kingdoms were represented by beasts so also the saints represented the kingdom of the Most High.

Priest and the Prince of the Congregation, the Anointed of Israel. The latter one concerns the royal figure. He is designated as prince (hb.*nasi*) of the congregation (1QM 5:1), a term found in Ezekiel 40-48. He is also called "Branch of David" (4Qflor 1:11-12). 1 QSb 5:20-29 has a blessing for the prince of the future congregation. It concerns with his victory over the ungodly, his dominion over the earth, and his justice for the oppressed.

It is clear from these texts that for the Essenes the Branch of David was one of the principal eschatological figures. He was expected to liberate Israel from the foreign powers and establish justice within Israel. In this matter the Qumran texts reflected the ancient popular traditions of kingship. Further we also notice that the "royal messianism" did not take precedence over the other, particularly, prophetic and priestly messianism. It is also clear that their concept of royal messianism was only in the larger view of eschatological fulfilment. Their preference to use "prince (hb.*nasi*) of the Congregation" rather than the traditional word "king" (hb.*melek*) indicated that their future king was subjected to the community.

The Psalms of Solomon, probably written around 50-40 BC by pious Jews in opposition to the Hasmoneans who had usurped the high priesthood as well as royal authority, expressed in clear terms about the future deliverance of the people. Ps 17:21 says: "Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, at the time you have foreseen, O God, to rule over Israel your servant". This king will rule as the representative of God who himself is the king of Israel forever and ever (vv. 1,46). The rule of this king is described in terms of OT Psalms and prophecies. He is expected to free Israel from its enemies and serve the Lord as pious, obedient and wise man. He is expected also to banish unrighteousness from the country. This expectation of future king, in fact, was in the context of the economic and political situation of the country.

If the machinations of the Hasmoneans had stimulated the Essenes and others to focus their hopes on a future anointed ruler, the tyranny of Herod and direct Roman rule would have provided plenty of provocation for the revival of memories and expectations focused on popular kingship. Under Herod people suffered a burdensome tax load, extreme social and political controls, famines,

and severe tensions between the priestly aristocracy and peasants. Perhaps Herod's own royal ideology reflected in his speech as recorded in Josephus' *Antiquities*, "I think I have, by the will of God, brought the Jewish nation to a state of prosperity it has never known before" (15.383-87), and his rebuilding the temple like Solomon, might have provoked the people to sharpen the contrast between Jewish expectations and the actualities of his rule.

Messianic expectations were lively and intense in the form of apocalyptic visions and prophecies. The Eighteen Benedictions (*Shemone Esre*), a prayer said three times a day, probably composed during the Roman reign, also reflects a similar type of expectations:

"In thy great mercy, O Yahweh our God, have pity on Israel thy people... and on thy Temple... and on the kingdom of the house of David, the Messiah of thy righteousness. Let the shoot of David sprout quickly and raise up his horn with thy help. Blessed be thou, Yahweh, that thou dost cause a horn of help to grow" (14th and 15th Benedictions).

Such prayers, centred on the hope of freedom, would certainly have given expression to popular messianic hopes during the Roman direct rule. People were eager for an "anointed" king from their own ranks like Saul or David of old.

There were several movements, each headed by one who "claimed the kingship" or "was proclaimed king" by his followers, occurred around the time of Jesus. As we have already noted, revolts erupted in all the principal districts of Palestine when Herod died in 4 BC. These revolts took the form of messianic movements. They were led by Judas in Galilee, Simon in Perea and Athronges in Judea.

(i) *Judas, son of the brigand-chief Hezekiah*: He led the revolt in Galilee. Large number of peasants followed him. He stormed the palace at Sepphoris and took away all the weapons that were stored there and distributed them among his followers. According to Josephus he was "craving for greater power" and of royal rank³⁸. Roman Governor Varus crushed his rebellion³⁹.

(ii) *Simon, a royal attendant*: Taking advantage of the chaotic situation after the death of Herod, he crowned himself as king. A

38 *Antiquities* 17.272.

39 *Antiquities* 17.271-72.

large number of people followed him. He plundered the royal palace in Jericho. He also set fire to numerous other royal residences in many parts of the country. His movement was soon crushed by the Romans⁴⁰.

(iii) *Athronges, a shepherd*: Proclaiming himself king, he held councils, settled disputes etc. With the help of his four brothers whom he appointed generals of his army, he held power for a long time. It took long time for the Romans to crush his movement⁴¹.

From accounts of Josephus we know that these popular messianic movements were centred around a charismatic king. People were not looking to the distinguished families for leadership. All the three royal pretenders were of humble origin: Judas, son of a brigand-chief; Simon, a servant of Herod and Athronges was a shepherd. The followers of these messiahs were mostly peasants. They organised themselves for military warfare. For example, Athronges' brothers served as heads of the divisions of the movements in Judea⁴².

These movements had specific goals: to liberate the people from Roman-Herodian domination and to restore the traditional ideals of a more egalitarian socio-economic structure. From Josephus we know that these leaders attacked palaces of Herod at Sepphoris and Jericho not simply to obtain weapons but to take back the goods that had been seized by Herod's officials⁴³. They attacked the forces of both the Herodian and Roman rulers. They also raided the aristocracy's estates and their residences. The long suppressed resentment over prolonged political domination and economic exploitation thus poured out into an egalitarian anarchism typical among peasant uprisings. During the ministry of Jesus all these movements were subdued, yet the memories of such movements were fresh in the listeners of Jesus. The Gospel narratives bear witness to such memories of Jesus' listeners when they wanted to crown Jesus as king.

Thus, these popular movements during the time of Jesus and even later indicate that the Jewish peasantry was capable of

40 *Antiquities* 17.273-76.

41 *Antiquities*, 17.278-80.

42 *Antiquities* 17.280-81.

43 *Antiquities* 17.274; *Jewish War* 2.57.

producing its own leadership and of taking collective action in a politically conscious way. Its past memories of previous liberation and popular egalitarian tribal confraternity helped the peasants to lead their revolt in distinctive social form.

Conclusion

Most of our studies on Jewish expectation of the messiah have always been focused on its fulfilment in Jesus. But we note, however, that the Jewish expectation of the messiah is much more complex than we think. In addition to various movements (literate) such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Fourth Philosophy, Sicarii etc there were other movements (non-literate) involving the peasants. Therefore it is important to recognise their concrete reality which has given birth to a number of such movements.

For all the movements the primary conflict was between the Jewish ruling groups and the foreign rulers on one side, and the Jewish peasantry on the other. In this respect, Jesus shared the basic concerns of the peasants. The literate groups do seem to have shared such concerns but with certain reservations.

The moving force to express these concerns for change in the social situation was a sort of popular agitation. Angry urban reactions, protest demonstrations and unrest arose from time to time. It was in the context of socio-politico-economic situations these movements should be viewed. It was also the same distress situation that gave rise to messianic expectations among the peasants.

Each of these movements (social banditry or messianic) is distinctive in its characteristics. Some of the types of these movements are found in other societies. The twentieth century intellectuals such as teachers and lower clergy organised movements to resist colonialism, slavery, exploitation, oppression etc. Such movements are found in a number of countries of Asia, Africa and South America where the socio-economic situation is similar to that of the ancient Israel. Some of these groups even engaged or still engaging in a systematic campaign of terrorism against their oppressors. Such groups enjoy popular support.

In a number of cases it is not the popular groups who appear to have been contributing factors to the outbreak of revolt. It is mostly

the ruling groups, who by becoming tightly repressive in their anxiety, contribute more to the general deterioration of the social order. The sixteenth-century Germany, the eighteenth-century France and Russia and the twentieth-century Mexico and China have clearly shown this. Therefore the popular movements must be seen not as causes of the revolt, but rather as either symptoms or signals of deteriorating social conditions. It should be seen as expressions of human beings' yearning for a better future and the restoration of an egalitarian socio-economic social structure.

Department of Christian Studies
University of Madras
Chennai 600 005

Jesus and the Economics of God's Household

D. A Alphonse

The author, professor in St Paul's Seminary, Tiruchirapalli, leads us to reflect on the economics of Jesus against the background of the Palestine of his times, Viewed in this perspective, the radical stance of Jesus in favour of the poor, the indebted and the marginal ones becomes strikingly clear to us; so too his teachings on poverty and his stringent critique on the riches and dehumanizing acquisitive culture. Characterizing Jesus' economics as that of "God's household" and reading it in relation to the present situation, the author underlines the importance of an ethical economic order that will safeguard the concerns of the victims in the present world-order.

1. Faith and Economics

No person with even a minimum of human sensitivity can fail to feel distressed by the massive and dehumanizing poverty that still prevails in India. As the nation blithely marches along into the third millennium, the stark realities of the many cases of starvation deaths or suicides, widespread undernourishment, diseases, illiteracy, lack of clean drinking water, adequate sanitation, medical care and proper housing that are mostly the consequences and concrete manifestations of poverty are staring at its face and stirring the consciences of any concerned citizen. But to a truly religious person who believes that all human beings are the children of the same God, and have been created in God's own image and likeness, such degrading poverty causes a profound sense of moral outrage, and calls for committed action.

Such conditions have, in fact, down the centuries moved and motivated the consciences of many Christians to undertake charitable actions, at times even of heroic proportions. What is even more significant is the response of the Christian communities as a whole in organizing relief activities and carrying out developmental projects on a large scale. More recently grassroots groups have emerged, some with Marxist leanings and links, that have moved beyond the

traditional charitable actions and the later developmental works, and have resorted to conscientizing the poor and organizing them for agitational action to reclaim their rights.¹

The Expendable Poor

These efforts, however noble and noteworthy they might have been, have proved to be too few and feeble, considering the size, spread and the structural nature of the problem of poverty in India, and have hardly succeeded in overcoming it. Newer forms of poverty caused by recent economic policies of India and oriented to economic liberalization and globalization are aggravating the already existent ones. What is even more alarming is the growing unconcern of the economic planners and the bureaucrats about the magnitude of the problem and of the rich and middle classes as well as the educated elites who are becoming increasingly narcissistic, greedily consumeristic, callously hedonistic and totally indifferent to the victims of the new economic policies. The most tragic aspect of the new economic order is that the poor have simply become expendable.

Faced with a sense of failure and frustration in the efforts to remedy this situation of deep-seated economic injustice, many - particularly among the concerned and committed youth - feel attracted to radical and extremist groups. However, many others have been lured into fundamentalist groups which end up by serving the vested interests of the dominant class by covering up basic economic problems while playing up some marginal religious ones to divert people's attention from the central issues. Such an exodus is also being witnessed in the Christian Churches. A large percentage of their adherents, many of whom were earlier their most dedicated and active members, are moving out of them and joining the Neo-Pentacostal groups with their marked unconcern for earthly realities and retreat into an exaggerated and emotionally charged otherworldliness.²

Even those who remain within the fold of the mainline Churches and commit themselves to issues of economic justice do not find their efforts adequately supported by clear reflection and concrete

1. Felix Wilfred, *The Emergent Church in a New India* (Tiruchirappalli, 1988). 97-127.

2. Paul Parathazham, "Neo-Pentecostalism in India: Preliminary Report of a National Survey," *Word & Worship*, 29:3 (Mar-June 1996), 81-101.

direction despite the current theologies and ecclesial teachings that certainly have started showing increasing concern with the area of economics. There is, of course, a growing conviction that, being one of the most basic concerns of human life and an important issue of public debate and political discussion, economics ought to be also moved to the centre stage of theological reflection. However, it still remains as one of the most neglected areas of consistent and comprehensive treatment by theologians.

Faith and economics are, indeed, two different things. And as a science, economics is founded and operates on its own principles. But as an essential factor determining human life and happiness, it is closely tied up with religion. For, it is religion that alone is able to provide it with its ultimate goals and undergirding values. Besides, in so far as faith implies a new vision and way of the totality of human life, it inevitably calls for a new way of looking at and dealing with economic matters as well. This applies all the more to Christianity with its essential eschatological dynamism towards the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. As Dr. Sahu points out, "Christian faith has much to contribute to the analysis of economic justice."³

A Truncated Version of the Kingdom

In fact, any form of Christian faith that remains unconcerned with economic realities belies itself in so far as it has abdicated its sole task of bringing God's kingdom to all areas of life. A kingdom that is understood and built up as only an interior relationship with God and is not realized also as food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, health for the sick, dwelling for the homeless, education for the illiterates, employment for the unemployed and equitable social relationships and economic distribution to the victims of oppression is only a truncated version of the kingdom of God that Jesus articulated in the Lord's prayer and in his ministry.

An authentic Christian reflection on the relationship between Christian faith and economics has to be rooted in Jesus' own preaching and practice. However, his message and ministry happened not in a vacuum but in a concrete socio-historical context,

3. Dharendra Kumar Sahu, *Christian Faith and Economic Justice* (Mumbai: Build Publication? 12)

and cannot be really understood without reference to it. So in this brief article, let me first survey in a summary fashion the economic situation of Palestine in the time of Jesus, and then proceed to study his teachings on poverty and wealth. In the final section, I shall try to extrapolate his message and ministry into our contemporary context and examine his would-be stance vis-à-vis the great economic systems of our time - capitalism and socialism.

2. The Economic Condition of Palestine

Palestine in the time Jesus had mostly a peasant agrarian economy. Peasant societies are differentiated from primitive and tribal societies not only by their more advanced agricultural and social organization but also by their condition of being politically oppressed and economically exploited. While in primitive societies the surplus is shared among its members, in peasant societies it is usurped by a ruling elite. It is this oppression that to a large extent determined their nature and functioning. As J. D. Crossan asserts, "A peasantry is defined in terms of an outside power, be it city, state or empire, that appropriates its agricultural surplus to itself."⁴ This description fits very well the situation of Palestine in the time of Jesus with its external political domination and economic exploitation by the Roman empire carried through mainly by the agency of the local ruling elite living in cities like Jerusalem.

A Skewed Society

The enormous wealth of the few that constituted the urban ruling class and the extreme poverty of the vast majority was by far the most significant fact that characterized the economic scene of Palestine in the time of Jesus. Following the population pattern that was prevalent in traditional agrarian societies, we can estimate that 5 to 7% of the people were wealthy and the other 93 to 95% belonged to the poor classes. In ancient agrarian societies, there was no section of the population that can be seen as a parallel to the middle class of more modern societies. Its roles were fulfilled in traditional societies by the retainers who could be seen as part of the governing class.⁵

4. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper 1991), 126

5. Anthony Saldañi, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988) 38. In their analysis

The wealthy governing class mostly consisted of the Roman civil and military authorities in Palestine, Herodians and their relatives and supporters known as Herods (Mk 3:6; 12:13) and the high priestly, aristocratic and mercantile families who mostly belonged to the Sadducean group and were centred in Jerusalem.

There is ample evidence both from the New Testament gospels as well as from historical and archeological sources to the existence of a Palestinian elite that had large landholdings and was wallowing in wealth. The gospels speak of the young man who "had many possessions" (Mt 19:22), a rich man who had no place to store his crops (Lk 12:17), another 'rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day' (Lk 16:19), and a landowner whose vineyards were so large that he could send in there as many labourers as he could find in the market place (Mt 20:1-7) and still another landowner who had leased out his vineyards to some wicked tenants (Mt 21:33). Historical sources confirm the wealth of some high priestly families and archeological finds - bear evidence to the luxurious houses of the rich in Jerusalem.⁶

Taxes and Tithes

Such wealth may have been to some extent inherited. But accumulation of it in the hands of the few had become in the time of Jesus even more accentuated due to the confiscation of lots of land by Herod some of which he had gifted to his supporters. After the dismissal and exile of Herod Archelaus his lands were appropriated and sold off by the Romans. Only those who were already rich could buy those lands. It is this landowning class that could produce, trade in and export products such as grain, balsam and oil. The profits

of the Palestinian Society Crossan and Saldarini mostly follow the models proposed by Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), S.M. Kisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires: The Rise and Fall of Historical Societies* (New York: Free Press, 1969) and John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empire*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1982.)

- 6 Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 92-95 and Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome A.D. 66-70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55.

that accrued thereby could also be used to acquire additional lands from the peasants.

The peasants in traditional agrarian societies, despite the hard work they put in, rarely managed to gain anything more than a mere subsistence level of economy. In Palestine too, the condition of the peasantry seems to have been no different. It had become even more precarious due to, as Theissen points out, natural causes such as draught and overpopulation, progressive concentration of possessions and the excessive competing tax systems of the government and the temple.⁷ In fact, the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the ruling elite and the deprivation of the peasantry was to a large extent brought about by the demand of tribute and taxes by the occupying Roman empire on the one hand and the tithes to be offered to the Jerusalem temple.

F.C. Grant has estimated that the total dues that a typical Palestinian peasant had to thus pay up amounted to about 30 to 40% of his total income.⁸ After such hefty taxes and tithes when a peasant did not have enough to feed his family or to take up cultivation the next season he was forced to borrow. Indebtedness was the chronic condition of the typical Palestinian peasant. When indebtedness became excessive, which probably was nothing unusual with interest rates ranging from 25 to 100%⁹, the peasants in increasing numbers were forced to sell off their small landholdings to their rich creditors. That these creditors were mostly the ruling elite living in Jerusalem is borne out by the fact that at the beginning of the great revolt in 66 A.D. the rebels set on fire the bonds of the moneylenders in the archives of Jerusalem.

Poverty-stricken Masses

The number of landless peasants was thus slowly and steadily on the rise. Many of them who had sold off their lands to rich landlords may have chosen to work as tenant farmers. But larger estates

7 Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 40-45.

8 F.C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels*, (Oxford: OUP, 1926), 105

9 Richard Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 89.

needed proportionally lesser number of workers and the result was increasing unemployment. Having lost their lands and faced with no opportunity for work, the peasants had only a limited number of choices for survival. The few who had the needed contacts and means could emigrate to the communities of the diaspora seeking employment there. Another recourse was banditry which because of its very nature and the risks involved could be the option of only a very small number. Some were forced to sell off one or more of their family members into slavery. Most others were left with no choice other than migrating to cities, the most important of which was Jerusalem. Even then, all could not find work and many were reduced to beggary to avoid starvation. Jerusalem in the time of Jesus did, in fact, have 'a huge poverty stricken mob'¹⁰ of landless people who had moved there from the villages.

What was the condition of such emigrants to Jerusalem or other cities in search of work but who did not find any and were reduced to beggary? Unlike the contemporary non-Jewish peoples who do not seem to have paid much attention to the poor among them, the Jews considered it a serious religious obligation to give alms and assistance to the poor. And certainly much help was given to the poor in a city like Jerusalem particularly during the Jewish festival seasons when pilgrims who had an obligation to spend part of their money there, arrived in large numbers. However, even the Jewish people took it for granted that there would always be the poor among them and their charity rarely extended beyond providing limited and temporary aid and was never aimed at the eradication of their poverty.¹¹ The result of all this was that poverty and its consequent social evils of hunger, diseases, robbery, prostitution and starvation deaths were not uncommon in not only the rural areas, but also the urban centres of Palestine.

A Unidirectional Economy

In general, Palestine of the time of Jesus had a unidirectional and accumulative economy in which wealth moved from the periphery to the centre, that is, from the villages to the cities without any

10. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, 66.

11. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, 65

corresponding distributive flow from the centre towards the periphery. A good portion of the wealth was siphoned off to Rome as tribute and some more remained in the treasury of the temple as accumulated and unproductive. This and the wealth amassed by the local aristocracy resulted in "an economy potentially out of balance."¹² It is this scene of increasing poverty and growing threat of destitution of the rural and urbanly displaced peasants on the one hand and the waxing wealth and luxurious living of the ruling elite that constituted the background in which Jesus' preaching and praxis of the kingdom of God take place.

3. Poverty and Wealth

Jesus was not an economist nor a theoretical analyst of the problems of poverty and affluence. He was the prophet of the kingdom of God. In so far as the kingdom means, in Johannine vocabulary, 'life in abundance' (Jn 10:16), a concern for and commitment to the total well being of all persons, including their economic welfare, is integral to it. However, one of the most strange and tragic fact about the traditional Christian theology is that it neglects to notice and reflect on the teachings of Jesus related to economic issues.

Most biblical scholars, theologians and even more so the ordinary Christians have thought of and taught about Jesus as though he is too sublime and ethereal a spiritual teacher to be concerned with such ordinary and mundane matters as related to money or want of it. But the fact is that, as Keith Tondeur points out, "Jesus has more to say about money and possessions than virtually anything else..."¹³ Economic issues such as hunger and food, hoarding and sharing, debts and forgiving them, sickness and healing find a major place in his message and ministry.

Towards a Culture of Sharing

Jesus was not only aware of the extent of the poverty among his people but was also deeply moved by the terrible toll it took on their lives. He was not a romantic visionary who idealised poverty. Being

12. Goodman, *Ruling Class*, 53.

13. Keith Tondeur, *What Jesus said about Money and Possessions* (London: Monarch Press, 1995), 13.

himself a village peasant from Galilee, he had a real experience and realistic perception of its tragic consequences. That is why abolition of poverty became one of the main motives of his ministry. This is clear from his preaching as well as the priority accorded to the poor in his ministry. It is further confirmed by the fact that the scene of his ministry was almost exclusively the Palestinian villages and small towns which were entirely peopled by the poor.

The kingdom communities that Jesus sought to establish in the villages of his ministry¹⁴ were to have a new economics of distribution in contrast to the economics of deprivation of the many and acquisition by the powerful few that had been put in place in Palestine by the Roman colonial rulers in collusion with the local aristocratic elite. What he envisioned for the communities of his followers and for the whole of Israel as well as the entire humanity was an economy of God's household in the place of the Roman imperialist economy of colonized exploitation.¹⁵ Though he has nowhere explicitly elaborated the basic principles of such a distributive economics its key features emerge unmistakably in his preaching and praxis.

The main element of the distributive economics of Jesus was obviously the sharing with the poor one's material possessions. Already in the message of John the Baptizer, the precursor of Jesus, there is a call to equitable sharing as a mark of one's preparedness for the coming of the kingdom and as a precondition to escape its wrath. John's advice to the crowds was, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise' (Lk 3:1 1).

Sharing may and at times will take the form of giving alms or helping those in need. Such forms of doing charity has already been mandated in the Old Testament. So Jesus does not so much exhort people to do charity as to tell them how to do it (Mt 6:3). What is remarkable about Jesus' teaching is that charitable actions such as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked become the sole criteria by which one is declared saved at the last judgement (Mt 25:31-46).

14. For a more detailed treatment of these village communities see Richard Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 209-284.

15. K.C. Hanson & Douglas Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 126.

That the community of Jesus and the twelve disciples practiced such sharing with the poor is borne out by the suggestion of Judas that the costly perfume with which Mary anointed Jesus' feet could have been sold and given to the poor (Jn 12:1-5) and by the disciples' misunderstanding of the words of Jesus to Judas at the last supper as a direction to give something to the poor (Jn 13:29). Apart from this, feeding the hungry multitudes is also a major mark of his ministry (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-9).

Giving Loans and Forgiving Debts

Giving loans to those in need of them is another way in which sharing is to be practiced in the kingdom communities of Jesus. Jesus' teaching is rather explicit in this regard: 'Do not refuse to anyone who wants to borrow from you' (Mt 5:42). Lending is to be done not only to those from whom the return of the loan is assured but especially to the very poor from whom there is risk of non-recovery. 'if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you?' (Lk 6:34).

In such situations when the poor are not able to return the loans the distributive economics of the kingdom calls for a partial or even full remission of their debts. Such cancellation of debts is already implied in Jesus' manifesto of Nazareth with its call to inaugurate 'the year of the Lord's favour' (Lk 4:19 & Deut 15:1-2). But the prayer of the kingdom that Jesus taught his disciples is quite explicit about it. One of its central petitions is 'forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors' (Mt 6:12).¹⁶ Forgiving the debts of the poor is taught by Jesus as a prerequisite for asking God's forgiveness for one's faults. Such a call for the cancellation of the debts of the poor is also repeated forcefully in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:23-35).

The table fellowship that Jesus shared with the poor and the rich, sinners and the Pharisees,¹⁷ and which was a scandal to many of

16. Though the terms 'debts' and 'debtors' here transcend mere economics and do include the spiritual connotations of sins and sinners, their primary meaning is economic. See Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982), 108.

17. For more on the table fellowship of Jesus see Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1992), 46-51.

his contemporaries was a practical enactment as well as a striking symbolic celebration of the distributive economics that he preached. This commensality, as J.D.Crossan suggests, 'is the heart of the original Jesus movement, a shared egalitarianism of spiritual and material resources... its materiality and spirituality, its facticity and symbolism cannot be separated.'¹⁸

The call for the practice of distributive economics rings out even more strikingly in the warnings and woes that Jesus addressed to the rich. In fact, we do not find anywhere in the gospels Jesus doing any socio-economic analysis to find out the dynamics of poverty among the vast majority of his people. Its causes were all too obvious to require on his part any such scientific analysis. He quite well knew that it was the ill-gotten wealth of the ruling rich that was in most cases the main cause of poverty. Poverty was then, as it is now, another form of aggression and violence perpetrated by the powerful minority against the vast majority of the population. It is against this background that we will have to understand Jesus' attitude to wealth and his warning to the rich.

Jesus' teaching about accumulated wealth must certainly have shocked his contemporaries as it does even today the members of our own culture that is increasingly becoming acquisitive and consumeristic. Jesus views accumulated wealth as 'dishonest' (Lk 16:9,11). This is because wealth in almost all cases is the fruit of injustice and even violence that may be often quite subtle and structural. S. Kappen expresses this very well:

Wealth is not something neutral. It is the accumulated unpaid labour of others. The wealth of the few is bought at the cost of the poverty of many. It is the fruit of aggression whether personal or institutionalized... In class societies all wealth is soaked with the blood of the innocent.¹⁹

Jesus goes even further in his negative valuation of wealth and calls it mammon or an anti-god. It is anti-God because it is anti-human. It is anti-human in so far as it is acquired and increased

18. Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 341.

19. S. Kappen, "A Lesson in Socialism" in S. Kappen (ed), *Jesus Today* (Madras: AICUF Publication, 1985), 68.

only by means of violence, personal or systemic, against human beings. It dehumanizes the poor from whom it is extracted and even more the rich who possess it because the quest for wealth soon becomes so all consuming that all human values come to be regarded as only a means to it. It also enslaves its owner by becoming his master and by claiming his total devotion it becomes a rival to the true God. "It is not he who possesses money but money that possesses him... the capital owns the capitalist; land, the landlord".²⁰ The conclusion of Jesus is obvious: "No one can serve two masters... you cannot serve God and wealth" (Mt 6:24).

Some of the most severe ones that Jesus utters are addressed to those who choose to serve mammon. He declares that it is impossible for them to be received into God's reign. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God' (Mk 10:25). For, in the process of gaining the world they have become heartless, soulless and Godless (Mt 16:26).²¹

How then are the rich to be saved? First of all, they have to give up greed and any form of acquisitive attitude: 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth' (Mt 6:19). Jesus also debunks the ancient and the ever modern myth that money can buy happiness: 'One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions' (Lk 12:15). His call to the rich is that they turn away from the idolatry of the mammon-god to the service of the true God. This, in concrete, is to be done by their turning to the poor in a brotherly solidarity of sharing. His repeated advice to them is, "Sell what you own, and give the money to the poor" (Mt 10:21; Lk 12:33). That is, they have to cease to be rich and make friends in the kingdom by sharing their ill-earned wealth (Lk 16:9). As Bruce Chilton points out, 'A camel that passes through the eye of a needle is no longer a camel and rich man who enters the kingdom is no longer wealthy.'²²

By sharing their material wealth with the poor, the rich come to

20. S. Kappen, "Either God or Money" in Kappen, *Jesus Today*, 71.

21. G. Soares-Prabu, "A Lesson in Socialism" in Kappen. *Jesus Today*, 59

22. Bruce Chilton, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1996), 77.

share in the spirit and thereby the blessedness of the poor. As Samuel Rayan explains, the beatitudes of the poor are: 'Congratulations to those who opt to be poor and refuse to join the rat-race for wealth and power, who reject the values and view of life that... place profit and power above people.'²³

4. Towards an Ethical Economic Order

Despite his congratulations to the poor and cautions to the rich, Jesus seems to have been under no illusion that economic justice for all can be achieved by the charitable and sharing actions of some individuals alone. An inevitable and essential component of his ministry of the kingdom was the call and committed efforts to establish a new society with an equitable economic order. His proclamation and praxis were aimed at eliminating the societal structures of exploitation and accumulation of wealth and introducing an ethical economics of distribution. This ethical economics of Jesus hinges on three important and inalienable human rights - to land, employment and just and equitable wages.

Land and Employment for All

The core element of the ethical economics of Jesus is the equitable distribution of land. This stance of Jesus is very significant in the primarily agrarian society of Palestine then, as it is in India today, where land was the primary form and source of wealth and monopolistic large landholdings were at the root of economic injustice. According to the Biblical tradition, the earth is the Lord's and all his children have an equal claim to it. As G. Soares-Prabu points out, "Every Israelite (ultimately every man) has a right to *the Land*... If he lacks *the land*, he is being unjustly deprived, he is oppressed."²⁴

Jesus' call to an equitable distribution of land is already implied in his manifesto of Nazareth through which he inaugurates a new jubilee. One of the key requirements of the celebration of the Old Testament jubilee was the restoration of the patrimonial lands to their original owners (Lev 25:13). Further, the possessions that Jesus advises the rich to sell off and distribute to the poor are obviously their large estates. In a modern society where the primary form of

23. Samuel Rayan, "Congratulation to the Poor" in Kappen, *Jesus Today*, 64.

24. Soares-Prabu, "The Social Stance of Jesus" in Kappen, *Jesus Today*, 60.

wealth holding has shifted considerably from real estate to the ownership of the means of industrial production and scientific and technological knowhow, Jesus' call for an equitable distribution of wealth has to be interpreted anew also to include broadened and cooperative ownership of the means of production as well as the speedier transfer of patent rights at rates affordable by even poorer nations.

Another important element of Jesus' economics of the kingdom is the right to employment. This is well brought out in Jesus' parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16). The behaviour of the landowner that is pictured as exemplary of the kingdom of heaven consists first of all in his concern for the condition of the labourers who are forced to remain idle for lack of employment possibilities as well as in his sending every one of them to work into his vineyard.

This parable implies that in any just and civilized society there will be no under or un-employment. Rather, opportunity for work will be a fundamental right. Capital - state and private - will not be allowed to remain accumulated and idle, but will be utilized to ensure employment opportunities for all. Mechanization and introduction of newer forms of technology will be welcome with a view to making human labour easy and increasing productivity and human leisure. Any such modernization that aims only at maximizing profit by making human labour redundant and causing unemployed will be regarded as anti-social.

Basic Equality in Wages

The same parable of the labourers in the vineyard also highlights the third important element of the ethical economics that Jesus envisaged for the kingdom communities, i.e. the right to just and equitable wages. At the end of the day the landowner pays even to the labourers hired in the evening the same 'usual daily wage' that he had agreed with those sent into the vineyard already early in the morning. The landowner's behaviour, instead of being dismissed as a capricious and whimsical conduct contemptuous of his hired workers or interpreted as only referring to the inscrutable 'generosity and goodness'²⁵ of God, is to be seen as a humane and fair act

25. Benedict Viviano, "The Gospel According to Mathew" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Bangalore: TPI, 1990), 663. It is surprising that popular

exemplifying the practice that ought to prevail in any just society. Considering the facts that the lately hired labourers had been willing and waiting for work the whole day and that their personal and family needs are basically the same as that of the labourers hired already in the morning, the landowner's generosity is not certainly as crazy as it might first appear.

The parable implicitly indicts as unethical the unfairly low wages on the pretext of oversupply of labour and the extreme inequality in salaries that is characteristic of contemporary capitalist societies and contributive to their ever increasing economic inequality. What is most ironical about the economic order of these societies is that those who perform the most essential duties and services that are paid the least wages while many others get paid much higher. Consider, for example, the case of mothers, domestic helpers, farm labourers and sanitary workers in contrast to entertainers, business executives and government bureaucrats! In addition to this, there is also the rampant discrimination of wages on the basis of sex, colour and caste. Such practices are unethical because they deny the basic equality of all human persons as God's children and do damage to peoples sense of self worth and dignity. For in any highly monetised society, as ours is increasingly becoming, people inevitably tend to judge their self-worth and the value of their work in the measure of the wages they receive. So, any sane and civilized society will have to urgently take appropriate steps to rectify these economic anomalies.

Capitalism or Socialism ?

At this final stage of our enquiry we cannot but face the question as to which of the existing economic systems, namely capitalism and socialism in one or another of their various forms, is more suited to put into practice the economic vision of Jesus. This, of course, is very different from asking the question whether Jesus was a capitalist or socialist. Obviously he was neither and such a question is certainly an anachronism in so far as these systems are much more recent in origin and were unknown in the time of Jesus. However, Christian

commentaries on this parable give only a religious or spiritual interpretation in terms God's free grace and generosity and fail to see its socio- economic implications!

praxis does require that we opt for, albeit critically, one of the available economic systems to realise the economic ideals of Jesus.

Capitalism definitely does not qualify for the purpose. With its avowed acceptance of economic inequality among people and of profit as its main motive, at its very core it runs contrary to the vision of Jesus. What about socialism then? Though some have not hesitated to see Jesus as a socialist, even the first and the best one, the magisterium of the Church had until recent times repeatedly condemned socialism.²⁶ The close association of some of the most influential brands of socialism like Marxism with atheism and the rather close connection of the Church with capitalist regimes and business interests were the twin main reasons for the Church's unqualified condemnation of it. But more recently socialism has become more flexible and variegated and the Church also has shown greater openness to it. Many theologians today recognise even its Marxist version as being close to christianity in some of its central elements.²⁷

However, even socialism has elements that do not fully accord with the gospel ethics and economics. While Jesus, following the Old Testament tradition, calls for an equitable distribution of land, some socialist regimes have tried to implement rigidly, and only with little success, collective ownership of lands. Besides, as hinted at in the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30), Jesus is not averse to the wise and socially responsible investment of private and cooperative capital particularly for increasing employment and to produce more and higher quality goods and services to provide a better standard of life rather than for mere profit. This would also foster individual enterprise, hard work, initiatives, creativity and healthy competition that will prove beneficial to society. Socialism, however, has tended towards monopolist state ownership of all means of production often resulting in inefficiency, lack of individual responsibility, bureaucratic bunglings and delays and stagnant economic growth.

26. Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 15 & Pope Pius XI, *Quadregesimo Anno*, 120.

27. For Example Jose Miguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), and Jose Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1974).

Transcending Mere Equality

Even if such defects of socialism are rectified we must keep in mind that Jesus' teaching while it goes counter to capitalism, does transcend the confines of socialism too. Going beyond its efforts to establish equality in society he promotes a kind of inequality that is the exact reversal of capitalistic inequality. In the place of the priority of the rich that capitalism creates and accepts, Jesus proclaims and promotes the priority of the poor as basic to his kingdom economics. In his view, only to the extent that a society ensures the priority of the poor in its economic planning and practice can it claim to be truly just and humane. Secondly, Jesus' economics is that of the kingdom or household of God. As such it is never fully achievable by mere legislative and administrative measures of the governments though they are integral and indispensable to it. What is most basic to it is the spirit of genuine brotherhood and fellowship. That can only stem from the living faith in God as the father and mother of all human persons.

St. Paul's Seminary
Tiruchirapalli

A Challenge to Hear the Victim's Voice

Nestor O. Míguez

The author, a New Testament scholar of Buenos Aires, Argentina, starts from the premise that we live today in a non-revolutionary situation characterized by globalization. What chances do the victims have for the realization of their dreams and hopes in such a non-revolutionary condition? The author reflects on this issue in relation to the new developments in social sciences. The author also grapples with the question of what it means to do theology in this situation in such a way as to uphold the cause of the victims. In this context, he makes also pertinent comments on the process of inculturation. He concludes saying that "the communication of the biblical message in these non-revolutionary times entails the opening of the canon to the new stories of pain and oppression, as well as the new stories and symbols of resurrection and victory".

Globalization, the new name for capitalist rule

Latin America (and probably the rest of the world also) is facing what we might call a non-revolutionary situation. It is the aftermath of a frustrated revolution. Not long ago, diverse revolutionary movements, whether seeking change through legal democratic means, or through insurrection, some non-violent, others resorting to violent actions, created some expectations about possible changes in social and economic structures. Some of these movements toward change were dismantled by repression; military intervention brought harsh dictatorships, unleashing times of horror, torture, and innumerable killing. Others were triumphant and could establish a new government, but proved unable to implement the desired transformations of society.

In the long run, through the re-establishment of conservative rule, dominated by new or old economic élites, now parading as "democratic", or through the peace agreements reached in some countries, the dominant capitalist market economy has been strengthened. This reinforced the pattern of wealth accumulation and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Some populist adventurers took advantage of the opportunity brought by the social uneasiness, generally producing more damage than good.

The practice of political clientelism and administrative corruption once again invaded the continent. A mood of resignation and despair, of political disbelief has taken over the minds of the people, especially the poor, the weak and the despised. They have become the "excluded", those who have no place in the new global market society. They drag around searching for a living, hopelessly clinging to political patrons or submitting themselves to abusive and precarious low-wage working conditions. Many fall in self-destructive conducts, crime and drug abuse, if not in behaviours nurtured by unfocused hatred, with the increasing rate of street and family violence and child abuse. Even the "*fiesta*" (popular gatherings, the celebration of Carnival, or major sports events, especially football/soccer in Latin America) becomes, at times, a place of violence. The process of rapid urbanization combined with social exclusion and violence also endangers the traditional networks of solidarity among the poor¹. Changes that could ameliorate the living conditions and quality of life for the majority of the people seem now farther away.

The capitalistic establishment proved to be stronger and more stable than was supposed, and the expected changes did not take place, or were jeopardized by dominant powers. The capitalist world was able to endure dangers from within and from without and emerge as the most efficient (!) economic system. It has also succeeded in creating powerful multinational corporations, at the expense of the national states that are not able to control or limit their ambitions. This is part of what is called globalization. The gap between the rich countries and the poor countries, as well as the division between the rich and the poor within countries, has widened. A real policy of exclusion of the poor is being implemented. While the Berlin Wall was destroyed, walls are being built along the borderlines of the rich countries and around the enclaves of the rich within the country, in order to stop the poor from invading the affluent world, or the

1 While this description mostly corresponds to social phenomena in Latin America, it also affects the Hispanic community in the U.S., whether by some parallel developments, or because of the influence of the constant migration that these same conditions create. For an example taken from New York City, see: Philippe Bourgois: "From Jibaro to Crack Dealer. Confronting the Restructuring of Capitalism in El Barrio". In J. Schneider and R. Rapp: *Articulating Hidden Histories. Exploring the Influence of Eric R. Wolf*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995, pp. 125-141.

privileged neighbourhoods of the local elite, guarded by private security.

The mechanism of international debts has resulted in the permanent transfer of wealth from the weakened states of dependent nations to the financial establishment of affluent nations. These policies, backed by the International Monetary Fund, imposed "adjustments" in the national administrations and the privatization of natural resources, with the subsequent reduction of local social security and welfare programmes and unforeseeable ecological consequences. The fictions of financial capitalism and the world market provide the ideological rationale for these new oppressive policies. The people's organizations, while in some cases able to defend civil and human rights, especially at personal level, were not equally successful in ensuring social rights, labour benefits, benevolent migration laws or other socially significant assistance. In many countries some of these social policies, conquered through the struggles of worker unions in the past decades, have even receded.

The fall of the Soviet Union has created a unipolar world, and there is no counterbalance to the aggressive policies of western nations. The United Nations, with its present organization, is not able to check this imbalance of power. Peoples of the new weakened states are feeling impotent and humiliated by these aggressions. Unable to confront with such an overwhelming power, too elusive or distant, and in need to redirect unrest to a credible scapegoat, some local governments have unleashed ethnic, religious or nationalistic discrimination against weaker neighbors now defined as timely foes. Globalization means not only a quantitative expansion of capitalist rule through world- market, the imposition of a "model" to which everybody everywhere should adhere, and the phenomena of instant communications. It affects also the qualitative dimension of human life and culture. Local trade and even the petty business of family industries or of aboriginal artisans are subject to the fluctuation of capital exchange in distant places. A decision taken in Amsterdam leaves 200 workers unemployed in Buenos Aires. The life of people who do not even know that the Internet exists and do not have the slightest idea of how the stock market functions are affected day by day by stock exchange in the Internet 24 hour round the world transactions.

In the ecclesial realm, the institutional structures also proved to be rigid. In the Roman Catholic Church an internal discipline was rebuilt at the expense of a more unrestrained Base Community ecclesiology, and restrictions and sanctions were applied to the most visible spokespersons of alternative theologies. In some Protestant churches a rebirth of denominationalism occurred, and severe cutbacks in social and development projects were caused by internal and constituency crises. The charismatic movement, mostly inspired by conservative theologies (though some notable exceptions should be made) experienced a significant growth, and more conservative missions were activated. The emergence of new religious movements informed by the spirit of individualism should also be taken note of. The prophetic voice of the Christian message was quenched, and is now mostly institutionally controlled, and the possibility for the Church to become a social paradigm of an alternative understanding of power, of open community and of renewed solidarity seems remote.

This brief description is offered here only to explain why this might be considered a non-revolutionary situation, the apparent stable situation created by globalization. The classic understanding of revolution presupposes a revolutionary theory to surmount the dominant ideology, a potentially revolutionary social force or class that can be organized through a revolutionary party, and a revolutionary ethos. These were thought to exist twenty years ago; not today, with few local exceptions of limited reach. This does not mean that some time in the future those circumstances might not be produced again. Against the *dictum* of certain contented advocates of the present state of affairs, we think that we have not arrived at the end of history. It is God who decides the end of human history, not the megalomania of some White House consultants. We are living in the past of the future. *This is why we can look at this time in history as the aftermath of a frustrated revolution, but not as the closing of history.* We still wait for things to change, for human history to continue, and for God's justice to manifest itself.

Globalization as the context of theological thinking

In this context, a double challenge is posed to theological thinking. On the one hand, we have to respond to the fact of globalization as a whole, of the overarching structures that run the major decisions in world economy and politics. On the other hand, we still have to recognize that globalization has not simply erased the variegated

spectrum of people's life, of cultures, of ways of relating and enjoying, of religious feelings and sensitivities. We have to deal, at the same time, with the so-called "one world system" and with the fragmentation of human concerns. Two concurrent excuses characterize those who want to avoid responsibility over the sufferings brought by the new situation. "This is a world system, we cannot do anything over particular situations. Globalization as it is has come to stay. People have to accept it and adapt to the model", is one part of the discourse. And in the same breath comes out the opposite: "People are different, we have to accept this fact. We cannot do anything because we look from a different perspective and have to let people live their lives as they wish or can". So, for the economic exploitation and political rule, the world is one, and run by such powerful and anonymous forces that little or nothing can be done. But, in terms of solidarity and recognition of the other, the world is so fragmented and partitioned, so built as watertight compartments, that people can only concern themselves with their immediate group and close surroundings, with little concern for the distant other.

This ideological aspect, sometimes positively described as "post-modern", conceals the fact that, behind the immediate forms of victimization that can be made visible in a simple way, there exist more complex and invisible mechanisms that create the necessary conditions for these to happen. The chain that ends in child sexual abuse in the streets of a slum in Rio de Janeiro can be linked with the interest of tourist enterprises in Germany, for example. But, on the other hand, it can also be linked with the disruption of family ties in the local culture. Both things occur simultaneously, and we can not reduce our understanding to a mono-causation. The context requires that answers should be given to the concrete living conditions and understanding of the people, while considering, at the same time, the globalized powers and system that constrain local conditions and give them a different meaning.

Shifting paradigms in social sciences

One of the most characteristic features of Latin American theology, though not exclusive to it, has been the appeal to social sciences as a basic resource and dialogue partner. But we must also consider the shifting paradigms in social scholarship, since we might find ourselves engaged in a conversation with someone who is not there any more.

While in previous decades social sciences were dominated by two opposite schools, identified with Marxism or with M. Weber's functionalism, an alternative paradigm in social studies has developed, which has incorporated some of the best fruits of the previous paradigms. It has overcome some of their weaknesses and has created new approaches. This new paradigm tries to combine the studies of social microstructures and the life world of social agents with the study of the overarching macro-social structures. It is mostly known as "structuration theory", and it includes diverse theoretical understandings and various schools. We can point to some main characteristics of this approach. Some of these, and the list is far from being exhaustive, are particularly relevant for our purpose:

- Special importance is assigned to the particular "life world" of social agents. No universal meaning is supposed; so, social actions and values are to be heeded in their significance in and for each particular setting.

- Social agents, whether individuals or groups, act according to their symbolic representation of the world. The construction of this symbolic world structures and limits the ways subjects are able to perceive themselves and their social relations.

- Everyday life is the *locus* where habits, meaning and conducts are shaped. Issues related to class, culture, concepts and language should be studied in the context of the ordinary development of events.

- Social structures have to be analyzed not only as expressions of a given order or organization, but also as producers of social meaning, and therefore, as they establish different types and qualities of human life and human relations.

- There are diverse dynamics in the different social fields and institutions, and a close study of the particularities of these dynamics in each field will show how they relate and how to differentiate between them.

- At the same time, the different forms and arenas of human activity must be thoroughly integrated. Sense and meaning are constructed through the multiple activities of the subjects, and are not to be isolated one from the other. A strict differentiation between material and symbolic production can not be maintained. There is no possibility of establishing a single, over-arching structure that

determines all human activity. A more detailed understanding of the interaction of material, social and symbolic structures has to be developed.

□ The meaning and sense of social ideas, actions, concepts and habits are those that the social agent gives them; the way he/she/they understand them to be. An entirely external evaluation of social conduct is not able to discern the significance of that behavior for that agent or for the life world he/she/they move in. On the contrary, importing foreign patterns into the agent's world, and judging attitudes by them, will always be misleading.

In this new paradigm sociology and cultural anthropology have come closer together, and historical studies also follow this path, through the study of social history together with the history of symbolic constructions of reality. Studies in religions and religious symbols have experienced a new momentum, since religion is a symbol-creating instance. There have been many studies along these lines in recent times, especially on the development of diverse new religious phenomena, and their relation to changing social patterns. A new theological construction needs to get acquainted with these new developments in the social sciences, as well as the new trends in the analysis of discourse and the construction and deconstruction of discursive power. These does not mean that we can do without an analysis of how economic and political systems work at national and world levels.

Narratives, the need to rebuild our theological corpus

In our theological thinking, with few exceptions, we were tempted to overlook the concrete life experience of real persons, of the everyday concerns of ordinary people, who are more preoccupied with the need to feed their children that night, than to solve the metaphysical issues of justice. This requires us to think about a theological construction that, on the one hand, will not blunt the cutting edge of the Gospel and, on the other, can be lived by ordinary and simple people in their everyday life as a new liberating practice of justice, solidarity and love. And it entails a quest for the symbols through which this Gospel is to become an experience in creative human communication.

If we are to take into account this double challenge posed to us by globalization, we are called to reconstruct our theological thinking

as we articulate the living (hidden) histories of the people. This would be a way to widen our horizons and at the same time to sharpen our theological concepts. How do the people of the slums of Bogota understand themselves in this changing pattern of global capitalism that breaks their poor working class expectations? How do they organize their symbolic world? How do the black inhabitants of a Brazilian *kilombo* consider themselves and their religious (*umbanda* or *candomble*) stand, that is the product of the syncretism of traditional African religions and the conqueror's Christianity, but at the same time an amusement show for tourist in Bahia? What about the life story of an aboriginal person born in the forest and who now has to earn his/her living in a metropolitan urban environment? Or, how would reality look to the migrant woman who has seen her dignity harassed by discrimination, and has been forced to accept being humiliated in order to survive with her children? Or how can a *chico de la calle* (street-boy), who has become the innocent vehicle of the pervading aggression of this society, understand life? And we can go on, considering the suffering of the imprisoned or exiled, the struggle of the families of the political prisoners and missing persons at times of dictatorship or civil wars, the millions of unemployed people, or the peasants deprived of their land, and so on. In what terms do they understand their present situation? What life worlds sprout out of those particular locations? What would a "good news of liberation" concretely mean to them? In what actions and language can it be expressed?

Certainly, committed pastors and theologians have been concerned with these and similar peoples and problematic situations, and have reflected on them. It can not be said that no one cared. But I would like to press the need to be more attentive to their own life worlds, to the ways the world and the self-image are built in those concrete situations. The only way to bring about justice and liberation is to understand what justice and liberation might mean for those different situations, from within, not from without. To that end a new theological *corpus* has to be built. The narratives of the eventless events that fill the lives of the humble, the excluded, the denied persons of today's world must be collected and incorporated as basic data of theological discourse. For a long time the Church has been proclaiming to be the voice of the voiceless. At times, it has effectively been such a voice, even at the cost of martyrdom.

Many other times it spoke about the voiceless in a church-centered way that helped to keep the real voice of the weak unheard. Perhaps time has come in which instead of being the voice of the voiceless, we must allow the voiceless to speak with their own voice, help to make that voice heard, and learn to hear what they have to say also to the Church.

Context, plurality and intersecting categories

In any theological construction, the problem of its relation to the context is a major question. The traditional difference between universal theologies and contextual theologies can no longer hold, since universal theologies are the contextual theologies of those who aspire to universal dominion. In the concrete paradigm shift of theological construction that we are envisioning here, this problem of contextuality becomes urgent. For, we are proposing the need to recognize the plurality of life worlds and to be accountable to that plurality also in the basic theological concepts. It would be impossible to collect a universal corpus of life stories and to work with cross-sections of all. Contextuality is a requirement of our theological programme because we are supporting here the need of the Christian message to deal with the concrete situations of the different social subjects, and that means to take seriously into account their symbolic worlds.

All theological construction must be able to learn and integrate, as far as possible, the particularities of the culture and life world of the peoples they are addressing. This will help to make the Gospel accessible and meaningful to that culture in its own terms. The theological discourse must be freed, as much as possible, from the characteristics of the dominant culture, of the accustomed wording that the western academy strapped it with, and should become credible in the new context². Different subjects would then be given the opportunity to find in the Gospel ways to express their own concerns, hopes and dreams, and an answer in their quest for human fulfillment. This is what has been called "inculturation". Even as we build bridges that permit the Gospel to be expressed in a new cultural environment, the Gospel has to become also a critique of all the

2 At the same time we must recognize that there is not any "pure culture", and that in today's world we must always take into account the fact that we live in what Néstor García Canclini has called "the hybrid cultures".

oppressing structures and attitudes in that culture. The Gospel must become an integral part of the culture while remaining foreign and critical of any culture, in order to announce the new, the different, the coming Reign of God.

We should not forget that the symbols and messages that might be dynamic vectors of liberating power in a given culture, or containing practical advice in a given historical circumstance for a social sector, can become oppressive in another culture. A plurality of human situations claims for a plurality of symbolic constructions and communicating strategies. This brings about a new set of questions: Are there universal symbols to which the Gospel refers and that must be appropriated and spelled out by the Church in each different context? Or, is the Gospel compelled to introduce new symbols, and then, how do they relate to the already existing symbols in that particular context? What is the novelty of the Gospel, where is its cutting edge in each particular situation? But then, how are we to respond to the fact of globalization, of the "hybridization" of cultures brought about by world market?

We must accept the fact that the plurality of human situations and human subjects needs a particular discernment coming from and addressing to the different human conditions. But, would not this create such a scattered discipline that Christians would find it impossible to communicate? Can we find intersecting categories that would allow us to put together those different life worlds and find common elements to relate them to one another? Does not an uncritical acceptance of pluralism pose the question about the interrelatedness of the human condition? Is not the concern for justice as the true expression of love also an indication of the need to live our own humanity in relation to the other?

And looking at more concrete elements, how do the constraints of global capitalism, which acts across social, cultural, gender, race and national boundaries, affect the lives of all? As I have mentioned at the opening paragraphs, the concern about social and economic justice have not been answered; on the contrary, we have to face an increasing challenge in that field. Concentration on the issues of the micro-social and in the plurality of subjects and cultural diversity do not dissolve the questions about social oppression, or of world structures of economic, political and military domination. There is

still a necessary space for the concern about the implications of the Gospel in the fields of world politics and economy. The recognition that class analysis and economic exploitation proved to be insufficient by itself to address all oppressive situations and that other categories and concerns had to be integrated does not dismiss the fact that class and economic analysis are still useful within a broader set of analytical tools. And, at least at this level, the theological discourse must consider these common concerns in the diverse contexts. But, in order to avoid falling in the shortcomings of previous attempts, that complex interrelations of micro and macro-worlds, of the plurality of subjects and symbolic constructions alongside with the multinational nature of world powers have to be kept together. The search of intersecting categories is not out of order for that purpose.

But I am aware that this aspiration creates in itself many problems, not the smallest being the concept of what cross-cultural communication is about, and how power structures condition all and every act of communication. There is also the question of whether there is a "culture-free" Gospel core that can talk to every situation, can be adapted or inculturated without being altered in that operation. And the no less poignant problem of who decides when the message has been correctly inculturated, or when it has been totally disfigured. Or, which are, in any life world, the symbols that can better express the true Gospel.

The problem becomes acute when those who supposedly know what the Gospel is are not able to recognize the Gospel, as they understand it, in what other peoples say and do as an expression of the Gospel message; or, when some feel that the symbols into which the Gospel has been integrated are really concealing elements which they see as denying the Gospel itself. Then, for some, what others call the Gospel, is no longer the Gospel, but the ideology of seditious groups. The problem gets aggravated when one of the parties in this discussion has institutional authority in the Church. Typically, in the so-called mission fields, this is the problem that arises when the Gospel acquires forms and rituals that preserve under new forms aspects of the previous (generally considered "idolatrous") religions. In that case, we are told, instead of the beatitudes of contextual inculturation we face the maliciousness of syncretism. This usually means: *"When we are in control, it is inculturation. When they do it, it is syncretism"*. We cannot develop here a complete analysis and

discussion of inculturation and syncretism, which would require a more profound debate. But, given the already mentioned fact that, through the mechanisms of hegemony, many ideological purports of the oppressors are integrated in the life world of the oppressed (to use a shortcut language that in itself has to be questioned in its dualism), the power games in the so-called inculturation and the ambiguity of syncretism has also to be considered.

The importance of a renewed biblical scholarship

Being in the field of Bible studies, I cannot conclude this article without some reference to my specific subject. Besides, I think that it is particularly relevant for this approach, because the Bible is in itself a great narrative. It is a great narrative, but it is also the witness of smaller narratives and life stories. The biblical narratives integrate the stories of everyday life at micro-level (the parables), as well as overarching views of developments at world politics (the visions of Daniel). It is the collection of testimonies about how God entered the life of a people, of certain communities, of some persons. It witnesses to their struggles, fidelities and shortcomings, their hopes and sorrows, their achievements and sins. In its totality, it is, over all, the narrative of God's love, as incarnated in Jesus, the Christ. And this narrative can not be separated from the Gospel, for it is in itself the way in which the Gospel came to be known. Some might say that this story is, purely and simply, the Gospel, and the intersecting point of the other stories/histories.

In the recent past, and for many scholars even today, biblical scholarship consists basically in the task of dismantling the text of the Bible in order to put each bit under rigorous scrutiny to define its origin, tradition, authenticity, theology and so on. I will not say that this is not useful at all. But if we are not able to put the text together again as a living whole, we have performed a Humpty Dumpty exegesis. The message dies in the autopsy. Fortunately, more and more biblical scholars are again realizing that efforts should be made to give account of the text as a whole. It is the narratives, and the narrative through the narratives, that give sense to the biblical witness. Through these narratives a plethora of life worlds become at least partially open to us. It is therefore important to recover the text as a whole and as an end product – and I am consciously making a positive recognition of the claims of canonical reading here, as well as of the contributions of structural analysis. But it is of no less importance to

emphasize the task of placing those narratives and witnesses in their own life worlds, and to discover the references they make to concrete social, cultural and political issues at stake in their times, as well as the conflicting understandings of the symbols they were using.

But this is not enough. These canonical narratives are to be put side by side with the life stories and life worlds of today, as well as with the other religious narratives that inform different cultures. Theological concepts have to be rebuilt through the intersection of the common and conflicting features in these stories, as this process has already happened many times in history. The communication of the biblical message in these non-revolutionary times entails the opening of the canon to the new stories of pain and oppression, as well as the new stories and symbols of resurrection and victory. By opening the canon I do not mean to select new stories to add to the biblical text, but to open it through the interpretation of the canonical text vis-à-vis these new and ancient stories of faith. It is the possibility of reading again the sacred texts as the life giving witness to the value and dignity of everyday life, and the possibility of recovering the symbols of hope, not as a theological concept, but as experiences of the faithful. The victims and the excluded of the market economy will be included in the history of God's love.

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